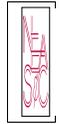


**New England Association of  
Schools and Colleges**



**Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

**Report of the Visiting Committee for  
Sacopec Valley High School**

**Hiram, Maine**

March 27-30, 2011

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## STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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

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

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

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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards  
Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations  
Curriculum  
Instruction  
Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Teaching and Learning Standards  
School Culture and Leadership  
School Resources for Learning  
Community Resources for Learning.

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

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

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Sacopee Valley High School, a committee of 64 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included five students, two parents, five school board representatives, and one community member who were on the standard committees.

The self-study of Sacopee Valley High School extended over a period of 18 school months from September 2009 to March 2011. The visiting committee was pleased to note that some school board members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population.

In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Commission, Sacopee Valley High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

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

A visiting committee of 14 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Sacopee Valley High School. The Committee members spent four days in Hiram, Maine, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented several public schools around New England, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Sacopee Valley High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 49 hours shadowing 14 students for a half day
- a total of 19 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 28 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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

## Overview of Findings

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

### Teaching and Learning at Sacopee Valley High School

While dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive processes appears to be a norm at Sacopee Valley High School (SVHS), the process to identify the school's core values and beliefs about learning lacked the usual level of inclusion and collaboration. SVHS has identified seventeen challenging learning expectations defined in holistic rubrics for every student which addresses the academic, social, and civic competencies including higher order thinking, time management, and collaborative skills. The school lacks an established plan and supporting process for reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations but there is no purposeful design. The Sacopee Valley High School curriculum allows students to develop higher order thinking, inquiry, and problem-solving skills within content areas, but there are insufficient formal opportunities to engage in cross disciplinary learning. There is a no curricular coordination and vertical articulation among academic areas within the school or with sending schools in the district.

While the teachers at Sacopee Valley High School use a variety of methods to examine instructional practices, the school is in the early stages of aligning instructional practices to school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers' instructional practices often support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, and many Sacopee Valley High School teachers collectively adjust and improve their instructional practices to meet the needs of students. Nearly all Sacopee Valley High School teachers are reflective practitioners, keeping current with their content area and content specific instructional practices.

The professional staff at SVHS does not employ a formal process of using school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers do not communicate individual and school progress regarding the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Across all content areas, students are given a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their learning of skills and content. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of assessments, including common assessments, and they regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning, progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are not formally and consistently being met.

### Support of Teaching and Learning at Sacopee Valley High School

The SVHS community consciously and consistently builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning. SVHS has a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school that they can connect with on a personal level, but this program is not structured and monitored. The school and school leaders use a research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on improved student learning. In many areas, SVHS is able to provide faculty members with a manageable student load and class size that enables teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

The high school's principal works well with other building leaders in providing data-driven instructional leadership. The principal actively leads faculty members and ensures that teachers are focused on best instructional practices through sound data analysis. The principal has established an open-door policy and is readily accessible to faculty members, students, and parents. Additionally, faculty members exercise initiative and leadership essential to the overall improvement of the school. The school board, superintendent, and high school principal are actively working towards establishing a cooperative, collaborative and long-term relationship.

Sacopee Valley High School has timely 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, but there is no coordination of these strategies. Support services staff at SVHS use technology to deliver an effective range of support services. A half-time nurse provides services and interventions for students. Library/media services are integrated into the curriculum and instructional practices, and the librarian actively promotes the school's curriculum. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide a variety of services.

The Sacopee Valley High School community and the School Administrative District #55, their governing body, does not provide dependable funding, and many school programs have been adversely affected. The Harriman Associates Study, self-study, and visiting committee observations confirm the need for substantial repair, renovation, or replacement of the high school. The SVHS community does attempt to fund, and the school does propose a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, facility needs, technology needs, and capital improvements but the funding is not currently available. As a result, Sacopee Valley High School site and plant do not support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Additionally, ADA compliance issues have negatively impacted programs and services at the high school. The professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in education and reaches out to families who have been less connected with SVHS.

### **School and Community Summary**

Sacopee Valley High School (SVHS) is located 35 miles northwest of Portland, Maine, in the township of Hiram, nestled in the western foothills amidst the Saco and the Ossipee Rivers, from which the Sacopee Valley name is derived. The high school is part of Maine School Administrative District (M.S.A.D.) #55 and serves the towns of Baldwin, Cornish, Hiram, Parsonsfield, and Porter. A tri-county community, Sacopee's constituents are located in York County (Cornish and Parsonsfield), Cumberland County (Baldwin), and Oxford County (Hiram and Porter).

With a combined population of 7586, the communities are economically, racially, culturally, and ethnically similar. No identifiable minority group comprises more than 0.8% of the population; a few students have parents who speak Spanish at home. The five towns have relatively similar populations, Baldwin (1418), Cornish (1394), Hiram (1562), Parsonsfield (1730), and Porter (1482). The median family income is \$43,387 in Baldwin, \$45,576 in Cornish, \$38,927 in Hiram, \$40,200 in Parsonsfield, and \$38,511 in Porter.

Rural in nature, the area has limited light industry, some farming (dairy/apple orchards) and forestry, yet offers few job opportunities. The area also serves as a second home/summer home for many out-of-state residents. There is significant economic hardship in the area, with 13.2% of the district population living below the poverty level. Out of 396 high school students, 51% receive free or reduced school lunches, and more students are eligible, but choose not to sign up. The largest employer in the area is the school system. The second and third largest employers are Vulcan Electric, a manufacturer of electronic switching devices, and New England Tool & Cutter Grinding. In addition, area residents are employed by service-oriented businesses such as beauty salons, restaurants, antique shops, gas stations, and convenience stores. Many local citizens commute nearly an hour or more to either the Greater Portland or the Conway, New Hampshire, areas. The unemployment rate for 2010 is 9.14% for the five towns, a significant increase from 4.62% in 1999.

In addition to Sacopee Valley High School (9-12) with a population of 396, MSAD 55 is comprised of Sacopee Valley Middle School (5-8) that was opened in 2007 and houses 381 students, South Hiram Elementary (K-4) with 224 students, Baldwin Elementary (K-4) with 84 students, Cornish Elementary (K-4) with 57 students, and Fred Morrill Elementary (K-4) with 46 students for a total school population of 1188. Hiram Elementary was closed in 2009 due to budget restraints. In addition, within the district there are two private schools. While there currently seems to be a slight trend toward decreased student population, overall, enrollment has remained stable.

For FY 2010, M.S.A.D. 55 has allocated per pupil expenditures of \$10,683 district-wide and \$9,842 for Sacopee Valley High School. The state average for FY 2009 was \$9,625. Local funding makes up 52% of the district's current budget. The percentage of local property taxes allocated to the public schools are as follows: 74% in Baldwin, 59% in Cornish, 59% in Hiram, 62% in Parsonsfield, and 57% in Porter, with a district average of 62%.

Sacopee Valley High School's current student population is 396 students in grades 9-12 divided between 221 males and 175 females. The building was originally built as a junior/senior high school with a capacity to hold 500 students in grades 8-12. The eighth grade was moved to the middle school in 2007. Otherwise, the school population has remained stable. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition of the school has remained similar to the current rates of 1.7% (7) Hispanic, 1.2% (5) African-American, .75% (3) Alaskan/Native American, and .50% (2) Asian students during the 2010 school year. The average dropout rate for the past two years has been 6.94%, the average daily student attendance rate 94.9% and the average attendance rate among teachers 96.3%.

There are 33 teachers and 2 JROTC instructors at Sacopee Valley High School, creating a ratio of 11:1. Individual teachers carry an average load of 90 students with a class average of 15. Students attend school for 175 days and teachers attend school for 181 days. The SVHS program stresses preparation for post-secondary education, and whole-school initiatives over the past ten years have encouraged college exploration. All students at Sacopee Valley High School are required to take four years of each of the core academic areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Additionally, students are required to take one year of Physical Education and Art, and ½ year of Health. 23 credits are required for graduation. The majority of the classes at SVHS are non-leveled. However, a number of Advanced Placement courses are offered and are open to all students. Other educational opportunities for courses not offered at SVHS abound via the Virtual High School (VHS) program. SVHS offers vocational courses for its students through the regional center, Lake Region Vocational Center (LRVC). Students in grades 9-12 are bused daily to the center where they can take courses, such as travel and tourism, culinary arts, health occupations, automotives, and carpentry.

As a result of increased expectations, SVHS has seen significant improvements in applications, acceptances, and enrollments at post-secondary educational institutions, from 53% of student graduates in 2000 to 78% in 2009. In the class of 2010, 42% of students attended four-year colleges, 20% attended two-year colleges, 5% entered the armed forces, 5% pursued certificate training, and 28% entered the workforce.

Nearby educational opportunities available to students and the community include Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), York County Community College, the University of Southern Maine, St. Joseph's College, and Andover College. M.S.A.D.#55 also has a well-established adult education program. The industrial technology department at SVHS offers a partnership with SMCC and Cianbro Corporation for an acclaimed welding program. SMCC also offers college courses taught in the district for students and community members alike, with both high school and college credits awarded.

Students receive academic awards and honors for achievement and effort throughout the school year and at the annual Academic Awards ceremony, held every spring. Students who make the Honor Roll for the first three grading quarters are recognized in May at the Honor Student Luncheon sponsored by the Student Council. In addition, all students who have "Partially Met", "Met" or "Exceeded" expectations on the annual Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are honored at a school-wide assembly. Other school-wide assemblies are held throughout the year to recognize athletic teams and encourage school spirit and student participation. Notification of all student successes are published in the local Shopping Guide newspaper; examples include Honor Roll, essay contest winners, state competition results, etc. Recognition for student efforts and achievements in sports, music and JROTC are given at awards night events. The most comprehensive display of pride and achievement at all levels and arenas occurs at the annual Spotlight on Student Success when all parents and community members are invited for an Open House and Pig Roast; every possible student success is displayed, whether academic, athletic, musical, theatrical, or public, including student work, trophies for dirt-bike racing, carpentry projects, Eagle Scout projects, student travel displays, and more. Performances and displays occur throughout the school at that celebration.

# 1 Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students, which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.
4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

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## Conclusions:

While dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive processes is the norm at Sacoep Valley High School (SVHS), the process to identify the school's core values and beliefs about learning lacked the usual level of inclusion and collaboration as seen in such initiatives as Summer Action Planning, PLCs, team meetings, and the creation of programs for student support as well as the creation and introduction of enriched programs such as Senior Seminar, Sophomore Gateway Project, and the Izzy project. A committee of four teachers established the core values and beliefs with little input from students, staff members or community or school committee members. The committee on Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations unsuccessfully attempted to bring more voices into the process through invitations to stakeholders and publicly held informational meetings. This lack of shared ownership for the newly created core values and beliefs and learning expectations hinders full buy-in by all the stakeholders.

In order to gain the full benefit of their stated values, beliefs, and expectations, more SVHS stakeholders need to commit to the process to further enhance the education the students of SVHS are receiving. (self-study, teachers, core values committee, leadership team)

SVHS has identified seventeen challenging learning expectations defined in holistic rubrics for every student, addressing the academic, social, and civic competencies including higher order thinking, time management, and collaborative skills; but they have yet to create analytic rubrics for these learning expectations. Unfortunately these learning expectations have not yet been formally implemented, nor have they been adopted school-wide yet. SVHS staff members are piloting these newly created, holistic rubrics for the school year 2010-2011. Once the pilot program is complete and collected data is analyzed, the school-wide rubrics are expected to be formally adopted next school year. Nearly all faculty members are familiar with the holistic rubrics, but use of the rubrics by faculty members is inconsistent and informal. Some teachers use the holistic rubrics as templates to create their own, others incorporate elements of the rubrics in their curriculum or design their own project-specific rubrics. Additionally, while the school has created a sound foundation with their holistic rubrics before they move too deeply with their implementation the school will need to revise their rubrics to an analytic format. Because SVHS has developed challenging learning expectations, the school has a potential to achieve high levels of performance. A deliberate process of developing and implementing the use of the newly created core values, beliefs, and learning expectations need to be formalized. If consistent use is the expectation, then SVHS will be able to embrace the formally adopted rubrics so they can realize the maximum positive potential that school-wide analytical rubrics can have on teaching and learning. (self-study, teachers, panel presentation)

The recently developed statement of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations has had a limited impact on school policy, procedures, and areas of curriculum and assessment practice thus far. It should be noted that previous guiding documents have been well embedded in the school culture, but the new learning expectations have not reached the same level of faculty familiarity or acceptance. The school has posted the mission statement and Sacoep Six in nearly every classroom and on many of the public documents used within the school. Staff members are piloting the use of 17 new rubrics during the 2010-2011 school year, and each teacher has been asked to use at least two of these holistic rubrics at some point during the school year. The expectation is that data generated by the pilot year will be used to determine "targeted levels of achievement" as well as to indicate expectations that are not being adequately addressed. The school board, administration, and faculty report that resource allocations, policies, and procedures are not currently driven by the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. SVHS has an established culture and mechanisms in place for full and meaningful adoption of the new core values and beliefs and learning expectations.

As students, teachers, administrators, and board members become more familiar and fully embrace the newly created core values, beliefs and learning expectations these should drive decision-making and guide the school's policies and procedures to better serve teaching and learning at SVHS. (self-study, administrative team, teachers.)

The school lacks an established plan and supporting process for reviewing and revising its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Review and revision of the plan during the summer action planning meeting and professional learning communities throughout the year “as necessary” do not provide adequate support for the process. The SVHS community has shown it has the capacity to implement, review, and revise a plan as indicated in the widespread adoption of the currently used guiding principles. The principal described a three to five-year plan for full implementation and broad acceptance of the core values, beliefs, and expectations. The newly created core values, beliefs, and learning expectations document is based partially on the school's previous mission statement and “Sacopec Six” Code of Conduct as well as Maine's Parameters for Essential Instruction, Guiding Principles and 21<sup>st</sup> Century expectations and is informed by the Endicott Survey an informal stakeholder feedback. Just as the core values committee has recognized that the original mission statement “was not reflective enough of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning expectations” and “that SVHS would need to create a core values document that was more flexible, explanatory, and reflective”, it must have a specific plan and timetable for full implementation, review, and revision. A plan to regularly review and revise core values, beliefs, and learning expectations will allow SVHS to maintain a greater currency and help to drive school policies, practices, and culture to continue to improve teaching and learning (school leadership team, core value committee, self-study)

#### **COMMENDATIONS:**

1. Established school culture and mechanisms to transition to a set of core values, beliefs, and expectations
2. School culture that created the Sacopec Six and guiding principles
3. Creating the seventeen challenging learning expectations defined in holistic rubrics

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Formally adopt the newly created core values, beliefs, and expectations so they will guide all academic decision-making
2. Create a documented review process of the school-wide rubrics for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations ensuring that future processes for creating, reviewing, and revising core values, beliefs, and learning expectations are collaborative and fully engage all stakeholders and are based on current research and best practices
3. Create analytic rubrics for all 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
4. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school and drives curriculum, instruction, and assessment and guide the school's policies procedures, decisions and resource allocation

## 2 Curriculum

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

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
  - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
  - the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
  - inquiry and problem-solving
  - higher order thinking
  - cross-disciplinary learning
  - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
  - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

## Conclusions:

Sacopec Valley High School's (SVHS) curriculum endeavors to provide opportunities for all students to practice and achieve each of the school's learning expectations, but there is no uniformed format that includes all of the standard's necessary elements for an effective curriculum. Sacopec Valley High School's Expectations for Learning reflect the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results. The curriculum exposes all students to a wide range of experiences and the program of studies clearly indicates that all courses are open to any student and outlines the pathways needed in order to earn the twenty-three credits required for graduation. The program of studies descriptors for some courses outline the knowledge and skills students are expected to master upon completion of a course whereas other courses merely provide statement of course topics. Within the curriculum documents, few content areas clearly identify the connection between course content and the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. However there are other course-specific documents in which learning expectations are clearly aligned with the Maine Learning Results. Still other course documents merely list topics and themes, are vague and generalized, and show little to no alignment with the core values. While providing much information about what is being covered in most courses, there is a clear need for purposeful design overall. The school has a common template that has been used in developing curriculum documents, but it does not in all cases include the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, instructional strategies, or assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. In some instances, the curriculum guides include essential questions, concepts, content, and skills for each course listed in the program of studies. Attempts have been made to align the curriculum documents to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations; but without clear understanding of the purpose and meaning of the process, these documents fail to meet the goal of completeness and effectiveness. Both formative and summative assessments are contained in several of the guides, including use of holistic school-wide rubrics and course-specific rubrics. Fundamental components required in the common format are essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, specific instructional strategies, as well as assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics. The absence of any of these elements negatively impacts the student's ability to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (curriculum documents, rubrics, classroom observation, examination of student work)

The Sacopec Valley High School curriculum allows students to develop higher order thinking, inquiry, and problem-solving skills within content areas, but there are few formal opportunities to engage in cross-disciplinary learning. This is an area that must be supported and fostered for all students. Opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills are also available for students. Higher order thinking, inquiry, problem-solving, and analytical skills are demonstrated in many subject areas, and all students are provided with laptops to self-assess, identify problems and develop resolutions, create tools and products for use in specific job applications and discuss broader social issues. Students are provided with opportunities to apply knowledge in authentic situations. Students incorporate research, public speaking and formal presentational skills in the Mock Trial, JROTC, Senior Seminar and the Sophomore Gateway Project, Real World and the World of Work Program. Courses of study in technology, in coordination with the SVHS Technology Department, are offered at Southern Maine Community College (SMCC). Welding students design, test and develop new tools and are taught entrepreneurship skills to market and sell their products. Additional vocational courses are available at Lake Region Vocational Center. Teachers say that due to time and scheduling constraints, there are few formal cross-disciplinary learning opportunities. Because SVHS connects to the broader social, economic, and educational communities through authentic experiences, students continue to enhance their chances for future employment, personal enrichment, and higher education opportunities. (Endicott Survey, observation, teachers, students, self-study)

There is insufficient clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. When faculty members teach common courses, common learning expectations, curriculum, and assessments are used. Monthly meetings for content area teams are ongoing for review, revision, and implementation of curriculum. Specific lesson plans and assessment practices, i.e. rubrics, suggest alignment between written and taught curriculum, but school-wide curriculum documents lack consistency, and elaboration of detail is needed especially in the areas of essential questions, use of analytical rubrics, and clearly articulated instructional practices. Additionally, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the curriculum document aligns with what is actually taught in the classroom; curriculum leaders do not review lesson plans. Because there is no clear alignment, there can be inconsistencies in instruction and assessment to hinder the teachers' ability to identify specific curricular goals that are measurable through assessment and that can supply data to identify gaps and areas of strength in specific curricula. These oversights and alignments should be provided to increase the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning for the SVHS educational community. Teachers should be expected to use curricula consistently. (teachers, curriculum documents, observations)

At SVHS there is a need for of curricular coordination and vertical articulation among academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. All departments have taken steps to align the curriculum in specific content areas, but this is a work in progress, and gaps exist. Although no coordinated curricula were shown, the high school English department reports that it has a completed vertical articulation of the 9-12 curriculum. Among the academic areas within the school, there is no articulated coordination either within or between departments. The current principal of the South Hiram Elementary School, largest elementary school in the district, is stipended to be the district curriculum coordinator but focuses most of her attention on K-8. The absence of a true district-wide and/or high school curriculum coordinator has necessitated that the high school principal act as de-facto coordinator. Time constraints, financial limitations, and administrators attempting to fulfill numerous and various job responsibilities have been obstacles in the vertical articulation process. The absence of vertical articulation has allowed curricular inconsistencies, hampering the identification of gaps in scope and sequence of courses within specific subject areas. The school should include coordination and vertical articulation in its curriculum work to enforce the importance of complete, effective curricula for all students. (administrators, self-study, teachers)

While the library/media center and technology have adequate resources, staffing levels, instructional materials, equipment, supplies, and facilities are insufficient to fully support and implement curriculum and co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Currently, there are insufficient resources in the areas of physical space, arts, music, curriculum coordination, technology and technology support, physical education, math, and science. The athletic director teaches three courses at two schools and other teachers are shared between the high school and middle school. The district has lost the Jobs for Maine Graduates program. Learning Labs, which provide academic support for struggling students, have been cut from eight to one and one half period per day, leading to unusually large study halls. Faculty members report outdated materials and inadequate and deteriorating facilities. The facility is not in compliance with OSHA, ADA, and state requirements. Some handicapped accessibility exists, but it is ineffective. In science rooms, outdated facilities and ongoing drainage problems have led to difficulty in conducting lab experiments. All students have been provided with laptops through Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI). There is, however, a limited budget for specialized computer applications that would allow science teachers to present simulated experiments, especially important given that the school has severely limited functional lab areas with outdated equipment. Special education classes are held in small rooms where there is no separate space when students in crisis are in need of removal from sensory distractions.

Students from the high school must use the middle school facilities for music and drama presentations. Because quality and effectiveness of curriculum delivery is limited as a result of insufficient resources and inadequate facilities, students are not provided the material resources to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century nor to master required 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. (classroom observations, facility tour, administrators, self-study, teachers)

The district provides the school's professional staff with insufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. The absence of a true K-12 curriculum coordinator has resulted in those duties being performed by the high school principal, content area team leaders, the leadership team, and the Sacopee Valley School Board Curriculum Committee. Each content area team is provided one planning period twice a week. Professional time for faculty members is allotted once a month during delayed openings, one faculty meeting per month, and one leadership team meeting per month. Grade level teams meet two to three periods per week. Many teachers voluntarily attend the Summer Action Planning Program, although this has been diminished as a result of funding cuts. Although teachers are provided time within their schedules for ongoing collaboration, the absence of critical support personnel and financial resources limit the effective use of this time. Teachers have opportunities to attend professional development conferences and workshops, but funding is reported to be inadequate. Research-based data (NWEA, PSAT) is collected and reviewed as is student-based data. However, its use in development, review, and revision of the curriculum is not evident in all areas. Because the district lacks focused leadership in the area of curriculum development and coordination and professional development is inadequately funded, the opportunity to develop, evaluate, and revise curriculum is limited. The resulting curricular gaps negatively impact students' ability to reach 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Thus the school needs to provide professional development, curriculum leadership, and a formal opportunity to create a complete, and effective curriculum. (self-study, panel presentation, teacher and administrator interviews, leadership team)

**Commendations:**

1. Commitment to providing meaningful application of knowledge and skills in authentic situations outside the physical confines of the high school facility
2. Numerous educational opportunities which encourage and foster higher order thinking and critical analytical skills
3. Provision of common planning times and scheduled meeting times for grade level teams and content area teams to improve student learning
4. Provision of MLTI laptops to ensure that all students have adequate access to technology

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop and implement specific school-wide interdisciplinary experiences/units/lessons
2. Develop and implement a process ensuring alignment between the written and taught curriculum

3. Develop and implement a process to ensure curricular coordination and vertical articulation among and between all academic areas
4. Provide clear leadership for district-wide curriculum development in order to establish coordination and vertical articulation
5. Provide adequate curriculum related professional development opportunities
6. Develop and implement a plan, with a timeline, which ensures all curriculum is written in a common format that includes: essential questions, concepts, content, skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, instructional strategies, assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics
7. Provide adequate resources to support a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum

### 3 Instruction

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

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations by:
  - personalizing instruction
  - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
  - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
  - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
  - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
  - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
  - integrating technology.
3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
  - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
  - strategically differentiating
  - purposefully organizing group learning activities
  - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.
4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
  - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
  - examining student work
  - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
  - examining current research
  - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.
5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

## Conclusions:

While the teachers at Sacopee Valley High School use a variety of methods to examine instructional practices, the school is in the early stages of aligning instructional practices to the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Faculty members continuously examine instructional practices but are only in the learning stages of how to examine instruction in regard to 21st century learning expectations and core values and beliefs. According to the Endicott Survey, 70% of staff members agree that they continuously examine their instructional practice to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Regular grade level meetings comprised of teachers from different academic disciplines, including special education, meet to collaborate on improving instructional strategies. However, only 40% of the teachers at Sacopee Valley High School indicates that they model respect, responsibility, and honesty in their teaching practices, and only 24% of teachers indicates that they use the Maine Parameters for Essential Instruction to guide their teaching practices and plan lessons that ensure consistency with the school's beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. One reason for the significantly low percentages is the changing educational terminology of the standards and student expectations. Anticipating the 2011 NEASC visit, faculty members created a mission statement and a statement of core values and beliefs. SVHS has yet to completely process how 21st century learning practices on a school-wide and individual level can improve student learning. The faculty members are working hard toward bringing meaning to the new terminology, its connection to instruction and its connection to student learning. The school is working on the goal of using two, newly-created school-wide rubrics throughout the 2010-2011 school year, providing the core values and beliefs written on assignments, implementing professional discourse regarding school-wide rubrics in grade level and department teams, and displaying of the core values and 21st century learning expectations throughout the school. The fully developed and implemented 21st century learning expectations and core values and beliefs creates clear school-wide goals, which drive instructional practices; until this is established, student learning is disjointed and unconnected to expectations and the school academic culture suffers. (observations, student shadowing, panel presentation, teachers, school leadership committee, self-study, facility tour, students, Endicott Study)

Teachers' instructional practices often support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction, making connections across disciplines, engaging students as active participants, emphasizing inquiry and problem-solving, engaging students in authentic tasks, integrating technology, and, to a lesser extent, engaging students in self-assessment and reflection. Teachers frequently personalize instruction, make connections across the disciplines, and engage students as active participants. Math teachers report they meet with students to discuss NWEA and PSAT scores so that they can formulate goals for the year. Spanish III students create an "All About Me" project that allows students to write about themselves using Spanish. Many students report that the citizenship class and senior seminar class allow them to explore their lives; where they are, where they are going, and how their lives relate to the world around them. Some students report that they can choose some of the books that they read in English class. English teachers hold one-on-one conferences with students about their essays. Students find that they are active participants in math courses by using ALEKS math software and Virtual High School. The World of Work program is licensed with Made in Maine so that students can create wreaths to sell at stores in Maine, and this program also integrates all core content areas. The history and English departments work together in essay development and editing a children's book assignment. Students are engaged in discussions, debates, and presentations in their English classes and senior seminars. Students also report that they see connections being made in Latin and English classes through learning vocabulary. (Endicott Study, teachers, students, student work)

Teachers regularly emphasize inquiry and problem-solving, engage students in authentic tasks, and integrate technology. According to the Endicott Survey, 80% of teachers and 79% of parents agree that teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills to support the achievement of the school's learning expectations. A thesis-paper in English class encourages students to think about society and the idea of Big Brother in the book 1984. Chemistry labs use inquiry and problem-solving to solve questions about the relationship of atomic mass to physical properties such as specific heat. A world geography project requires students to compare and contrast their assigned country's culture, weather, and government with our country. The Real World class brings real-life issues to the students by introducing them to sewing, cooking, preparing taxes, managing a bank account, and buying a car. The TV2 program allows students to obtain real-life television studio training by recording and editing town meetings and athletic competitions for the local access station using industry standard software. Virtual High School has given students the opportunity to take classes that SVHS does not offer. Many students said that they use their laptops all the time to write essays, create movies, research projects, and to access teacher websites. Teachers, especially in the ninth grade, bring students to the media center to learn how to correctly use the Internet as a research tool. Teachers sometimes engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Although there is some self-assessment and reflection, it does not take place consistently. English teachers often use reflection as an essential part of their classes. Sample work shows student self-assessment and creative improvement through multiple revisions of essays. Students report that the Gateway Project and senior seminar classes make them reflect on their past, current, and future life. Students report that some math teachers allow the revision of assessments for half-credit. Sacoee Valley High School teachers purposefully instruct students by using personalization, engaging students in inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, and authentic tasks. Students are thus more engaged and moving towards achieving 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. If given more opportunities across the curriculum to self-assess and reflect, students will take even greater ownership of their learning. (Endicott Study, teachers, students, student work)

Many Sacoee Valley High School teachers collectively adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of students by: using some formative assessments, especially during instructional time, deliberately differentiating instruction for students, employing strategies that purposefully organize students into group learning activities according to student aptitude, providing additional support and alternative strategies to help students access instructional material when traditional strategies may not be effective. According to the Endicott Survey, many formative assessments are employed; in-class quizzes, and questioning for comprehension during lectures/discussions are one of the most common means of assessing students. Other strategies used are exit tickets, journaling and pair share, checklists, feedback forms, and student-led discussions. The majority of teachers circulate in classrooms to check students' progress, giving one-on-one instruction and offering modifications and challenge options. The staff also compiles and analyzes data from summative assessments to guide differentiation in the classroom, including ASVAB, SAT, and NWEA scores. In both the Gateway Project and senior seminar, instruction is differentiated greatly to allow for student choice and voice in their learning. According to the Endicott Survey, 80% of staff members at SVHS agree they differentiate their instructional practices to meet the learning needs of all students although some reports of concern about academic rigor have been noted. A number of alternative and supportive programs are also available, including the World of Work (WOW), Virtual High School, JROTC, vocational opportunities, learning labs, and Real World. Teachers differentiate instruction for a student's readiness, his or her level of skill, and according to Bloom's taxonomy scale of critical thinking. Evidence of purposeful organization of groups includes language arts and math faculty members grouping students according to NWEA scores.

Additionally, faculty members meet at least twice a week in grade level teams to discuss how to best meet student needs; on every committee is a special education teacher who engages in professional discourse supporting and seeking alternative strategies in the classroom. (observations, student shadowing, student work, panel presentation, teachers, parents, school leadership committee, self-study, students, Endicott Survey)

All students use laptops to support their learning, thus allowing access to a range of technological supports and enhancements in the classroom. Lastly, according to the Endicott Survey, the most common strategy referenced by 69% of teachers is the use of teacher-student support. Many teachers' conduct before and after-school hours for any and all students to access help, and many students express gratitude to faculty members' dedication to students on both an academic and a personal level. The frequent use of formative assessment and purposefully organized grouping impacts student learning by allowing the teachers to understand student progress, comprehension, and ability to apply new knowledge so teachers can better adjust classroom instruction. The variety of differentiated instruction and additional support offered positively impacts student learning, allowing students to be active members of their learning. (observations, student shadowing, student work, panel presentation, teachers, parents, school leadership committee, self-study, students, Endicott Survey)

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, regularly improve their instructional practices by: analyzing achievement data and engaging in professional discourse, examining student work to improve their instructional practices, gathering some feedback from a variety of sources, and continuously engaging in professional discourse. Most faculty members engage in data analysis to adjust and drive instructional strategies in their classrooms; data is collected from, but not limited to, NWEAs, pre-SATs, and ASVABs. During the Gateway Project, students are engaged in data analysis, thinking critically about their own learning strengths and weaknesses, and exploring their own future potential by defining personal values and beliefs. The Gateway Project directly spirals to a SVHS Senior Seminar Exit Exhibit where students prepare an extensive presentation for a panel of friends, family, and community members; students provide feedback to teachers about public speaking, and teachers adjust instruction to better meet the student's needs. (observations, student shadowing, student work, panel presentation, teachers, parents, school support staff, school leadership committee, self-study, students, Endicott Survey)

Regular grade level meetings comprised of teachers from different academic disciplines, including special education, meet to collaborate on improving instruction, analyzing the summative assessments, and formative classroom observations, conversations, and written check-ins. During these meetings, faculty members discuss student achievement, focusing on 'at-risk' students and making action plans to contact parents and conduct meetings to focus on strategies for student success, including alternative means of instruction. On occasion, team meetings will use a fishbowl protocol to look at student work and the assignment to offer feedback for teacher instruction. The administration also gives feedback to the teachers, ensuring goal-setting and assessment in the areas of instruction, literacy, and technology. Faculty members elicit some feedback from students and parents, but due to its inconsistency this doesn't have a wide-spread positive impact. Along with these aforementioned means, faculty members are engaged in many avenues to examine current research, including pursuing university level course work in their discipline, with many faculty members earning graduate credits, attending conferences in order to further professional expertise, and following up by sharing this knowledge with other SVHS faculty members, and being members of national and state teachers associations. Many faculty members take part in the SVHS Summer Action Planning to reflect on the school, create goals and vision for the future, and to discuss the implementation of instruction for the

upcoming year.

Teachers adequately improve their instructional practices at SVHS, both individually and collaboratively, to meet the needs of a variety of students, with great focus on data analysis and professional discourse in order to ensure that their students are achieving as many 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations as possible. (observations, student shadowing, student work, panel presentation, teachers, parents, school support staff, school leadership committee, self-study, students, Endicott Survey)

Nearly all Sacopee Valley High School teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott Survey, 87% of teachers at Sacopee Valley report that they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Conversations with teachers reveal that all math teachers are members of the Association of the Teachers of Mathematics of Maine and/or the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. With this membership, they receive and read the professional journals containing content information and teaching ideas. The biology teacher attends a genetics conference every year as part of her advanced placement (AP) course preparedness. Other AP teachers attend week-long advanced placement institutes held at local colleges. The special education teacher attends one conference per year and shares information with teachers upon her return. Teachers also consistently mentioned that team time is utilized to analyze data and discuss best strategies to help struggling students. The leadership team reports that Sacopee Valley High School employs a two-tiered professional growth and evaluation cycle for probationary teachers and continuing contract teachers. Teacher Improvement Plans/Teacher Action Plan and Professional Teacher Action Plan demonstrate teachers' reflective practice for self-improvement. Sacopee Valley High School utilizes a mentoring program for probationary teachers. Throughout the first two years, the mentor provides support, performs observations, and acts as a resource to help the new teacher transition into their professional content area. In order to obtain recertification, many Sacopee staff members state that they attend seminars, workshops, and webinars. Mathematics teachers attended a vertical teaming conference in mathematics. Some teachers attend in-house book studies. A special education teacher reported attending several beekeeping workshops and now uses her knowledge to teach her students in the World Of Work program to raise bees. Because SVHS teachers maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, students benefit through overall improved teaching and learning. (self-study, teachers, school leadership committee, Endicott Survey)

**Commendations:**

1. Faculty members' pursuit of professional development opportunities
2. Faculty members' use of feedback from formative and summative assessments to create and implement alternative strategies and to differentiate to meet the needs of varying students
3. Faculty member's active engagement in furthering professional expertise and following up with colleagues to engage in professional discourse to inform instruction
4. Commitment to regular grade level team meetings to reflect in student learning, instruction practices and supportive strategies

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop and implement a plan to ensure teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to be consistent with the schools's core values, beliefs and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
2. Expand efforts to differentiate to all levels of students to ensure academics are challenging for all
3. Develop and implement a process for teachers to elicit meaningful feedback from students and parents that will enhance teaching and learning
4. Increase opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect

## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 4 Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to the school community.
3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.
4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.
8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
  - student work
  - common course and common grade-level assessments
  - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - standardized assessments
  - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
  - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

## **Conclusions:**

The professional staff at Sacopee Valley High School (SVHS) does not employ a formal process of using school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Seventeen school-wide rubrics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on Maine's Guiding Principles are being piloted during the 2010-2011 school year by many of the faculty members. These include the peer-to-peer behavior rubric, the matrix of intervention form, directed notes protocol, and the research rubric and the Latin teacher is using the communication and technology rubrics in her course. Some content areas have made more progress in the use of these rubrics than others. The English teachers use a writing rubric for all writing assignments, but the writing rubric that is used daily by the English teachers is rarely used by teachers in other content areas. However, a variety of formative and summative assessments are used to ensure that each student has regular opportunities to be assessed on each of the school's learning expectations. Some of these assessments include the Sophomore Gateway Project, the Senior Exit Exhibit, the Izzy Project in US History, the Citizen Geography project, the JROTC reflection sheets, surveys, quick-writes, exit slips, homework, tests, quizzes, lab reports, essay writing, the Checkpoint assignment, the junior thesis project, and the English portfolio. Thus, although the school uses a wide variety of assessments, it does not employ a formal process to use school-wide rubrics so that some students are not assessed on all of the school's learning expectations, and the school cannot assess achievement of its expectations. Because the school lacks a formal process of assessing whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on school-wide rubrics, it cannot ensure that every student is regularly assessed nor can whole-school progress be evaluated. (panel presentation, teachers, self-study, student work)

The professional staff at Sacopee Valley High School (SVHS) does not communicate individual and school progress regarding the school's 21st century learning expectations. As a result, there are not a variety of methods of communication to students, their families, and the school community. Because the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and school-wide rubrics are not used consistently in all classrooms, the school cannot report on individual and school progress on the learning expectations. However, faculty members, grade level teams, and administrators communicate student achievement in individual courses to students and parents via teacher-student conferences, formal and informal grade reports, progress reports every four weeks, quarter grades, e-mail, phone calls, NWEA scores in letters mailed to the parents, parent conferences, September Open House, the Infinite Campus website, course websites, the sophomore gateway project and senior seminar. Communication of school activities and events is fostered by presentations, websites, TV-2, Newsletters, marquee out front, the shopping guide newsletter, brochures for individual clubs, and SVHS Spotlight on Student Success. Since the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations have been newly developed, school-wide progress is not clearly communicated. As a result, parents, students, and the wider community are aware of neither individual student achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations nor the school's progress in meeting the same expectations. Full implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations will garner a better understanding of the expectations for all concerned. (teachers, parents, self-study, students, school board)

The professional staff at Sacopee Valley High School (SVHS) consistently collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Teachers, grade-level teams, and advisors regularly collect, disaggregate, and analyze a range and variety of data/results, including formative and summative assessments, in order to make changes and modifications in the curriculum.

Some of the changes to the curriculum include the implementation of Learning Labs/guided study rooms, summer school, credit recovery program, SAT tutorials, Virtual High School (online courses), and the addition of six advanced placement classes, and University of Southern Maine and York County Community College courses. Standardized tests including NWEA, SAT, PSAT scores are evaluated to determine the correlation to success in the classroom. Information and data are disaggregated at faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, leadership meetings, workshops, and SVHS Summer Action Planning where faculty members voluntarily meet to discuss changes to courses and curriculum based on data accumulated throughout the school year. Individually, teachers evaluate assessments following units of study to determine changes in curriculum and class work, and several classes use portfolios, end of unit/semester/and year-long projects as an assessment tool for accumulation of understanding of subject matter. Many teachers are involved in the collection and evaluation of data used to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, and effective changes to the curriculum have been implemented in individual class instruction and through the addition of enrichment classes. Utilization of data has been the foundation of improvement to the curriculum of the school through the addition and diversification of classes. (panel presentations, teachers, school leadership committee, school board, central office administrators)

Prior to each unit of study, teachers are required to communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. Teachers communicate expectations and goals to students in a variety of ways including individual course guides and syllabi, unit specific projects, and extended assignments with rubrics and exemplars. An example of this is the English department's use of unit-specific guidelines and learning goals for projects, papers, and the senior portfolio, the outlines of senior seminar, sophomore gateway project and a standardized lab report format in the science department. The Sacopee Six Code of Conduct provides students and parents a guideline to classroom and school-wide expectations for behavior and decorum. The Core Values Committee has developed a series of school-wide rubrics that focuses on each of the expectations of student learning, which are being piloted during the 2010-2011 school year by having each teacher integrate at least two of the seventeen into their courses. These expectations are new, relatively informal, and therefore few teachers are actively communicating them to students. Most individual teachers communicate unit-specific goals to the students, but, because the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are new, the students are unfamiliar with them and are not yet able to use them to further their academic achievement. (observation, self-study, student work, teachers, students)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. Course-specific rubrics for individual projects are provided to students prior to giving the assessments. Examples of this include English portfolios, standardized lab reports, the Izzy Project, junior thesis, senior exit exhibit, sophomore gateway project, an overarching English writing rubric, world language rubrics centered around the Sacopee Six, and a common oral presentation rubric. The rubric format varies from one class and project to another. Rubrics which use a scale of 1-4 (meets, exceeds, partially meets, or does not meet expectations) have over the past ten years become a common style of rubric not only familiar to most students, but also accepted, used, and understood. These holistic 1-4 rubrics are often used prior to unit assessment in some of the core content areas to JROTC curriculum and industrial technology courses. Other scoring rubrics, such as itemized checklists as evidenced in theater arts and math rubrics, science lab reports, and social studies reports are used in addition to holistic rubrics. On the Endicott Survey, 77.1% of students indicated that they understand the rubrics used by their teachers. Parent responses, however, revealed less familiarity and understanding of the use of rubrics for assessment (56.9%). Despite the differences in the formats of the rubrics, students and parents felt that class expectations were clearly articulated in individual classes and students know what is expected of them to be successful in each class.

Teachers provide students with rubrics, which identify specific learning goals and expectations, but since the format of the rubrics is inconsistent from one teacher to another, many students are confused by the terminology and format variety, therefore the effectiveness of these rubrics is compromised. Professional development in rubrics use and a single format for rubrics would help. (student work, self-study, teachers, students, curricular guides, Endicott Survey)

In each unit of study, a majority of Sacopee Valley High School teachers employs a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. Across all content areas, students are given a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their learning of skills and content. The multitude of examples include: the “Izzy Project”, writing portfolios, tests, quizzes, peer editing, the sophomore gateway, senior week projects, the junior thesis and public speaking, science lab reports, iMovie and PowerPoint productions, and TV2 productions. Students are also given opportunities to “redo” formative assessments and summative assessments to focus on learning the material. Students are asked to reflect on their academic and personal growth and share their learning over time by writing reflections for their English portfolio. The use of a wide variety of assessment strategies provides the faculty with a clear picture of student learning and achievement that can inform curriculum and instruction and offer students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning. (student shadowing, student work, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Sacopee Valley High School teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of assessments, including common assessments. Content area teams meet monthly, and sometimes more frequently, to review curriculum and assessments. The science department has worked to develop common lab report assessments. The English department has developed writing rubrics and portfolio assessments. The world language department has developed common rubrics, including one for oral language achievement and another measuring adherence to the Sacopee Six. Standardized testing is analyzed by administrators and teachers, and the results are used to revise curriculum and assessment. Some teachers utilize NWEA assessment data to plan individualized instruction for students. The administrators and teachers who attend the SVHS Summer Action Planning meeting review data from assessments and create school-wide goals based on that data. Grade-level team meetings are focused on providing support for individual students and developing intervention plans rather than reviewing assessments. The regular collaboration among teachers ensures that the development and analysis of assessments is a consistent part of the school's practice so that individual student academic needs are addressed. (teachers, self-study, student work)

Most teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work. Many opportunities exist for students to correct formative assessments and some summative assessments. Teachers use their grading policies to encourage students to revise their work and offer corrections to demonstrate new learning. Students are given opportunities to improve test scores or overall grades on projects or papers. Teachers also provide individual conferences, both in the classroom and during unstructured times, to assist students with learning new skills and materials. The school has also made a concerted effort to communicate more frequently with students about extra-help sessions with faculty members. Some teachers provide regularly updated grades to students. In general, it appears that students are expected to access extra help on their own and it is not clear what strategies teachers use to work with reluctant learners. An intervention plan was developed that included implementation of Learning Labs at each grade level to provide a way to ensure struggling students got needed help before losing course credit, but most of those were ended because of financial constraints. Additionally, teachers use the Matrix of Intervention to ensure that parents are called, plans to help struggling students are made, and students access extra help after school.

Therefore, while teachers work tremendously hard providing assistance to students and are dedicated to allowing students to improve grades, a fully developed plan of interventions for struggling students will ensure that all students revise and improve their work. (students, teachers, Endicott Survey, self-study)

Sacopee Valley High School teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade team utilizes NWEA data to plan individualized instruction. Math has implemented the ALEKS math program to allow all students in Algebra I to continuously work on areas of weakness and so that students can access the curriculum. The utilization of the “Sweet Sixteen” reading strategies to improve NWEA reading scores has also been adopted by some teachers. There are many examples of teachers using practice quizzes, pre-tests, discussions, self-reflection, homework, and journals to gauge the progress of student learning and developing appropriate instructional responses to student learning. As a result of these practices, teachers are regularly responding to student learning in a proactive manner and ensuring that their instruction is responsive to student academic needs. (observations, self-study, teachers)

Sacopee Valley High School teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, but there is little evidence that progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations is being made. The structure of the content areas allows for the development of common assessments at each grade level. The summer action planning team regularly examines data to recommend curriculum revisions. Math, social studies, and science have each revised the curriculum students are taught in response to standardized test expectations and results. The current class schedule was created in response to concerns about student learning, and data is currently being gathered to determine whether or not the schedule improves student learning and the school environment. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade team utilizes NWEA results to improve instruction and revise curriculum. Data from the middle school (NWEA, Title 1 services, grades) is provided to and used by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade team to develop plans for incoming students. Post-secondary and alumni data and surveys are available as a result of the MELMAC grant. As a result, SVHS effectively utilizes a wide variety of data to continuously improve student learning. Developing a system for measuring student achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations will enhance this work. (self-study, teachers, administrators)

While reporting practices have been regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs, grading practices have not. The Endicott Survey indicates the following: only 63% of staff members agrees that grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised; only 59% of parents believes teacher grading practices are aligned with the school's beliefs about learning; and only 64% of students thinks that teacher grading is fair and consistent. Reporting practices have had some revisions. The district as a whole has revised student achievement reporting with moderate success in grades K-4. Some district work on reporting has taken place in grades 5 and above. The implementation of the parent portal for Infinite Campus in grade 8 has been met with enthusiasm, and there are plans for increasing parent access in the high school. Grading practices vary widely between teachers and content areas, however, while students clearly understand how they are being graded in different classes, they are unable to connect the grading with the schools core values and beliefs. Many students are focused on earning points rather than on achieving the learning goals of each content area. Therefore, a focused examination of grading practices and beliefs will ensure greater continuity throughout the school and improved understanding of SVHS grading by parents and students. (Endicott Survey, students, self-study, parents, district administrators)

**Commendations:**

1. The collaboration of teachers to develop and revise formative and summative assessments
2. The review and examination of student data to revise curriculum and improve instruction as well as developing school-wide goals
3. The use of a variety of assessment practices which encourage students to improve their work and learn the course material
4. The use of course-specific rubrics which are provided to students prior to summative, and some formative, assessment
5. The use of a wide range of evidence of student learning to plan for the transition of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to the high school

**Recommendations:**

1. Implement a formal process to use 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations regularly with all students so that the school can assess individual and school-wide achievement in a meaningful way
2. Institute a formal process that assesses individual student and the schools progress toward achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Develop a formal system for communicating individual achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families, and school-wide achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to the school community
4. Evaluate the current grading system and develop and implement a plan to ensure consistent grading practices and rubric development across the content areas so that grading practices align with and support the school's core values and beliefs about learning
5. Develop and conduct professional development in the use of rubrics ensuring there is a common format for the rubrics used in the school

## 5 School Culture and Leadership

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
  - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
  - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
  - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
  - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.
6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.
7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.
8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.
10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.
11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

## **Conclusions:**

The Sacopee Valley High School community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The Sacopee Valley community fosters a safe, positive, and respectful school climate by a variety of offerings including but not limited to: guided study, alternative education, junior reserve officer training corps (JROTC), Reducing Sexism & Violence (RSVP), Virtual High School (VHS), senior seminar, and PLC Grade Level Teams. Sacopee Valley High School has established the goal of increasing awareness of the core values of Respect, Responsibility, and Honesty, which is important in preparing students for higher education, a successful career, and knowledgeable and involved digital citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although the majority of faculty members, students, administrators, school board members, parents, and citizens of the Sacopee Valley community share in the ownership of these goals, there are some reports that there is some subsurface teasing or bullying still ongoing without the faculty's or administrators' knowledge. In many other ways, Sacopee Valley High School is successful at creating a supportive culture, fostering student responsibility for learning, and encouraging school pride through the "Spotlight on Students" held each spring, at which student achievements are highlighted and community members are welcomed into the school through celebration. Through the JROTC Veterans Day event, held each November, Sacopee Valley High School builds positive and respectful culture and community relations. The SVHS Senior Seminar course offers a culminating experience for seniors fostering student responsibility for learning and resulting in shared ownership and high expectations for all. The pride in the school is reinforced through pep rallies for athletic teams and academic achievement assemblies. When a concerted effort like the one witnessed by the visiting committee, is put forth by staff members, students, and parents these community members ensure the cohesive and positive school culture essential for teaching, learning, and nurturing student success that strengthens the teaching and learning environment at Sacopee Valley High School. (observations, panel presentations, students, teachers)

Sacopee Valley High School is equitable and inclusive where every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in most curriculum areas. Sacopee Valley High School has diverse needs in terms of individual learners although not in racial or ethnic areas. Most classes at Sacopee Valley High School are grouped heterogeneously other than advanced placement (AP) classes and pre-AP classes, which are open to the entire student body as long as prerequisites are met. Special education students have total access to the same curriculum as the rest of the student body, with special education teachers and technicians providing support within the core subject classrooms in order to individualize student learning. The alternative education program, heterogeneous as well, is not a special education program, and students of all abilities may apply and be accepted into the program. In offering heterogeneous classes, a full curriculum is available to all students at Sacopee Valley High School in an equitable and inclusive way. (students, student shadowing, teachers, panel presentation)

Sacopee Valley High School has a formal, but unstructured, on-going advisory program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student and will assist the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Sacopee Valley High School has scheduled advisory time within the school day although little structure is provided. The intent of advisory groupings is for each student to get to know an adult well. There appears to be some inconsistency in how this is accomplished, and there is lack of cohesion in efforts of getting to know the same adult throughout their high school career.

There is some other structure within the school that allows for adults within the building to get to know students well, such as grade level teams, but they are outside of the formal program that would assign an advisor/advocate/mentor to each student. Providing more structure particularly for the advisory program and some training for its leadership, and clear and consistent expectations for its use would ensure that every student knows an adult who can assist the student in achieving the school's learning expectations. (teachers, panel presentations, students, publications)

Sacopee Valley High School's principal and professional staff engages in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; and dedicate minimal formal time to implement professional development. Some administrative and faculty members take part in the SVHS Summer Action Plan with the intent to design an action plan for the coming school year that addresses teaching, learning, and support services. The PLC grade level teams meet twice a week during common planning times. This time is used for reviewing teaching practices and collaborating on techniques that best serve the Sacopee Valley High School student population. Time is also spent discussing students' needs and teaching strategies to support their achievement of academic, social, and civic expectations. Professional development time is provided for one and a half hours once a month, on Thursday mornings. The majority of this professional development time has been most recently used for NEASC preparation. Now that the NEASC visit is complete, rededicating the professional development time to discourse for reflection of teaching and learning should be a priority so teachers can continue to apply their skills, practices, and ideas in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment, resulting in overall improved student learning. (panel presentations, teachers, school leadership committee)

Sacopee Valley High School and school leaders use a research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on improved student learning. The current practice involves a three-year cycle, which includes two years of writing and revision of professional teacher action plans in conjunction with meeting district professional and personal goals. Administrators review and provide summative analysis for professional teacher action plans. At the end of the three-year cycle, faculty members take part in a formal evaluation of their teaching practice as it relates to the professional teacher action plan. It is important to note that there were some conflicting reports about the regularity of classroom observations and how often they are really accomplished. It was also reported that administrative leadership has changed at SVHS five times over the last ten years, a fact that may have contributed to the inconsistencies reported in this matter. SVHS has plans to improve the evaluation system, and there are plans to change the three-year cycle to a five-year cycle so that the evaluation process will better coincide with the recertification cycle. Each faculty member new to the district takes part in a formal mentoring program in which they are paired with a mentor who completes three observations and provides feedback to the new faculty member. Additionally, administrators perform iWalkthrough informal observations each month that involve measures such as room arrangement, higher order thinking, class-size, and student engagement. Improving the evaluation system is imperative because regular and consistent evaluation and observation is integral for assessing and reflecting on best teaching practices and in making instructional improvements in order to improve student learning. (teachers, panel presentation, school leadership committee)

The Sacopee Valley High School schedule allows for professional collaboration among teachers and meets the learning needs of many students. The scheduled grade-level common planning allows for regular formal time for teachers to collaborate across content areas for the review of student work, for review of instructional strategies, and for data analysis. Throughout this time, the Sacopee Valley High School has explored and implemented alternatives to department-based structures in order to address goals of interdisciplinary curriculum design and enhance student personalization.

Sacopee Valley High School is piloting a 6-period, 8-course schedule with 55-minute classes with plans to review and assess the effectiveness of the schedule at the end of a three-year trial period. Providing common planning time allows for a discussion of best instructional practices and collaboration among faculty members. A comprehensive review and assessment of the current bell schedule by all faculty members and high school administrators will engage the SVHS educational community in a much needed discussion allowing them make any needed adjustments to the bell schedule as the current educational professional staff deems necessary in order to best provide for the learning needs of all students. (panel presentations, teachers, students, classroom observations)

Sacopee Valley High School is able to provide faculty members with a manageable student load and class size that enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students in many areas. Sacopee Valley has been successful in keeping class size below 25 students in the majority of courses, with the exception of physical education/wellness, Spanish, and learning lab. Faculty members are available during scheduled after school hours and outside of scheduled time through volunteer programs such as the “Content Areas Support After School” program. As a result of budget constraints, the number of learning labs was reduced from eight to one and one half, although learning labs were found to be successful in supporting students’ academic needs outside of the regularly scheduled classroom and after school time. Providing manageable class size and student load with the necessary support outside the classroom allows students and faculty members to be successful in personalizing learning and meeting individual academic needs of all students of SVHS. In light of its effectiveness, the learning lab time should be returned to the schedule. (panel presentation, student shadowing, teachers, students, self-study)

Sacopee Valley High School and the principal works well with other building leaders in providing data-driven instructional leadership that is rooted in the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal actively leads faculty members as the school transitions toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations and the statement of core values and beliefs. The principal ensures that teachers are focused on best instructional practices through sound data analysis. The principal uses innovative data analysis techniques to engage parents, students, faculty members, administrators, and the school board in the decision-making process. The decisions made about instruction and curriculum support the learning of every student and are consistent and fair with the use of the growth-based models, rather than traditional target goals. Because the principal works well with other building administrators and uses data-driven instructional leadership, he is preparing his students to be 21<sup>st</sup> century learners through the clear instructional vision he provides. (teachers, panel presentations, observations, school leadership)

Sacopee Valley High School is successful in involving faculty members in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The principal has established an open-door policy and is readily accessible to faculty members, students, and parents. Faculty members are extensively involved in the decision-making process through voluntary SVHS Summer Action Planning meetings, grade level teams, and the leadership team. The principal is a “students first,” visible force within the school. The principal is an excellent communicator and accessible to all, comprehensive in his care and advocacy for all students and faculty members and open to feedback from all members of the school community. Despite the comprehensive job done in reaching out to and working with students and parents, there are limited formal mechanisms for students and parents to take part in the decision-making process.

Because the principal involves faculty members in the decision-making process, a positive culture is created within the school community that is necessary for creating a community-wide sense of ownership and responsibility for addressing school needs, further including students and parents in formal decision-making will enhance this process. (teachers, students, self-study, panel presentations, parents, community members)

Sacopee Valley High School faculty members exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Faculty members serve on committees that review and revise curriculum, assessment strategies, instructional practices, and school organizational practices such as grade-level teams, leadership team, and SVHS Summer Action Planning. Faculty members are actively engaged in leading initiatives in the school, such as grant writing and student activities. Initiatives led by faculty members, such as senior seminar, sophomore gateway, advisory, and World of Work, have been designed to improve the overall climate and life of the school. Faculty members take an active role in improving the instructional practices, improving student engagement in learning, and improving the overall climate of the school. Because of the high level of teacher initiative, all aspects of teaching, learning, and school culture are enhanced. (teachers, students, panel presentations, observations)

Sacopee Valley High School's school board, superintendent, and high school principal are currently working to foster a collaborative, reflective, and constructive relationship in order to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The superintendent and the high school principal have established a positive and collaborative relationship. Historically, there has been a perception of micromanagement and inequity in the collaborative relationship between the principal's position and some school board members. Issues such as the bell schedule, weighted grades, and the benefit of senior seminar are examples where the decision-making authority has been taken away from the professional educators at the high school, leading many of them to wonder whose responsibility it is to make administrative decisions at the high school, the principal or the school board? A truly collaborative relationship is essential for creating a constructive and productive working partnership in order to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Improvement in this area is necessary to ensure the continuity and longevity in the principal's position that the school system is reportedly striving for in light of the immediate history of administrative turnover. (panel presentations, teachers, parents, school leadership)

The Sacopee Valley High School, School Board and superintendent currently provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The formal job description of the principal states that the job goal is to use leadership, supervisory, and administrative skills to promote the educational development of each student. Particular responsibilities include but are not limited to: supervising the instructional programs of the school; making recommendations concerning the school's administration and instruction; leading the development, determination of appropriateness, and monitoring of the instructional programs; and assisting in the development, revision, and evaluation of the curriculum. The school board must be encouraged to continue to trust and rely on the current principal and continue to grant him sufficient authority to make all the administrative decisions that are characterized in his job description. Failure to provide sufficient decision-making authority to the principal jeopardizes the long-term vision, mission, and well being of the SVHS' educational community. (panel presentations, teachers, parents, school leadership)

**Commendations:**

1. School-wide and community celebrations that establish safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture
2. Academic activities that foster student responsibility for learning and result in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations
3. The informal collaborative spirit of reflection and inquiry that exists within the faculty
4. Commitment to providing common planning time for professional discourse
5. Maintaining small class sizes necessary for personalized learning
6. The fact that the principal is a true data-driven instructional leader
7. Faculty members' voluntary participation in the SVHS Summer Action Planning Program
8. Faculty-led initiatives like the senior seminar that engage students in high quality and meaningful life practices
9. Faculty determination to explore grant opportunities for school improvement

**Recommendation:**

1. Ensure the adoption and effective use of a consistent teacher evaluation system
2. Create formal mechanisms to expand student and parent involvement in the decision-making process
3. Ensure adequate levels of learning lab coverage to provide student support and assist students achieving the school 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
4. Assess the piloted schedule, based on data, in order to assess its effectiveness in meeting the needs of all students and implement best teaching practices
5. Provide and use future structured professional development around skills, best practices, and ideas in order to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning
6. Continue to provide sufficient autonomy in order to ensure consistency and long-range continuity in the high school administration
7. Design a more consistent structure with clear expectations for the advisory time to ensure the adult who knows the student well assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
8. Define appropriate administrative decision-making authority for the school board, superintendent, and principal using current school laws and regulations as a guide
9. Adhere to a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for the school board, superintendent, and principal

## Support Standard

# 6 School Resources for Learning

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

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - deliver a written, developmental program
  - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
  - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
  - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
  - use an appropriate referral process
  - conduct ongoing student health assessments
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
  - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
  - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
  - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
  - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
- collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
  - perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

## Conclusions:

Sacopee Valley High School has timely 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, but there is no coordination of these strategies. Sacopee Valley High School has a number of support services that enable all students to achieve the school's Core Values and Beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. Support services at Sacopee Valley High School include an advisory program where every student meets regularly with a small group of peers and one teacher with an extended advisory once a week that allows for large group activities. The advisory program is committed to the goal of every student making a supportive connection with at least one or more adults in the building and for ensuring that students achieve mastery of the school's expectations. Other programs include Lake Region Vocational Center which offers a hands-on, career-oriented education in a variety of programs, the SVHS Reducing Sexism & Violence Program, the SVHS Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps that emphasizes student achievement, character development, wellness, and civic service, the MELMAC Education Foundation Grant, drop-out prevention/intervention, alternative education, Upward Bound, advanced placement classes, and credit recovery. Because Sacopee Valley High School has timely and directive intervention strategies and programs, there is a reported reduction in the number of students who fail to meet the school's learning expectations, further coordinating these intervention services will enhance the school success in serving student needs and obtaining the learning expectations. (teachers, students, school leadership, school support staff, Endicott Survey)

Sacopee Valley High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. This is done using a variety of methods including e-mail, phone calls, and invitations to informational meetings and school-sponsored events. The guidance department sends out a newsletter on a regular basis, produces the course of studies book each year and publishes a list of available scholarships. Guidance and special education staff members often call home to connect with parents. While the support staff is making efforts in this area it is important for support staff members to continue to look for creative ways to reach the parents of all students, especially those most in need. Sacopee Valley High School's efforts to communicate and involve parents enhances student's academic success and further efforts in this area will reach more parents and enhance more students' ability to be successful. (parents, teachers, school leadership, self-study)

Support services staff members at Sacopee Valley High School use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for student support. The support services staff all have laptop computers, enabling these staff members to access data instantly, resulting in managing less paper. The counseling staff has greater access to students' grades, schedules, and post secondary information. The nurse is better able to manage student health information, visits, and record keeping for the state. The special education department has access through Infinite Campus to student grades and assignments, and the library media personnel use technology to keep track of materials using the web-based program "Destiny" along with access to resources all over the world. Support services' use of technology allows Sacopee Valley High School's support staff to have up-to-date and timely student information to support intervention strategies and current information used for post secondary planning. However, the staff should continue to explore ways in which technology can further ensure all students achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations (teachers, students, observations)

Sacopee Valley High School has an inadequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to deliver a guidance program whose personnel meets with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling, and a comprehensive guidance program.

Currently, Sacopee Valley High School employs one full-time school counselor, a full-time biology teacher providing guidance services two class periods per day, and a guidance secretary. The guidance secretary is responsible for maintaining the operations of the guidance office and has a historical knowledge of the community. There is funding available to fill the position for a second full-time counselor, but the position has not yet been filled. Currently, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team has assumed the duties of career and college counseling to fill the void of not having sufficient counseling staff members. The guidance staff meets with students to discuss academic concerns, scheduling, and post secondary school planning. Freshman and sophomore year, counselors meet with some students in small groups once at the beginning of the year and individually with seniors in the fall, they meet with juniors in the spring, and they are also available to meet with students by appointment. The guidance staff refers students to the social workers and to the Tri-County Mental Health counselor. Relevant assessment data including feedback from the school community is not being used to improve services and to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, nor is there evidence of a written guidance plan. While the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team is taking on the role of career and college counseling, adequate, comprehensive guidance services are needed to ensure that every student is able to reach his/her ultimate potential, and students are adequately served. (teachers, students, leadership committee, guidance counselor)

Health services at Sacopee Valley High School have an inadequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. Currently Sacopee Valley High School has a half-time nurse who provides services and interventions for students. She often meets with students to discuss medical issues i.e. mental health, eating disorders, birth control and abstinence and will refer students to the Health Center and to Tri-Country Mental Health. The nurse does screening for hearing and sight, provides emergency medical care, and is able to keep the necessary medical records for the school and the state. There is a doctor who spends 15 hours per school year to do sports physicals. The nurse's half-time position does not provide adequate nursing services throughout the school day. The nurse reports that if she had more time in the building she could provide expanded services to include classroom education and teaming with the health program. The school nurse does not use data to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Sacopee Valley High School needs to have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel that support the medical needs of all students throughout the entire school day so students can access the nurse and the nurse can be involved with the health program and provide classroom education. (nurse, teachers, standards committee, Endicott Survey)

Library/media services are integrated into Sacopee Valley High School's curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel. Sacopee Valley High School has one full-time librarian who is actively engaged in promoting the school's curriculum. She works with students and teachers to support their work through accessing resources both within and outside the school, teaches and supports the research process, and continually works to have current materials available for students and staff members. The librarian teaches students how to use the State of Maine database "MARVEL! Virtual Library and the web-based application called "Destiny" which keeps track of book circulation, patron data, and shared media equipment. Students are used as interns to help with such tasks as shelving books and photocopying. Currently, the librarian is the only staff person in the library. Last year the assistant position was cut, so she is not able to go to classrooms to integrate the library resources. The librarian is working to be more involved with the curriculum and expanding her services beyond the library. Staff and students can access the library from 7:30 a.m. to

3:30 p.m., and she is willing to accommodate the needs of students and staff on an individual basis. The librarian is using data to improve services/collections and ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. While the librarian works to implement the school curriculum and improve instructional practices, she is limited in her abilities to work in classrooms to fully integrate the library curriculum. Providing additional coverage resources in the library would allow the librarian to spend more time helping teachers and administrators implement school curriculum and improve instructional practices to better ensure the students are achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (teachers, students, Endicott Survey)

Support services at Sacopee Valley High School for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide a variety of services. Over the past several years, special education services have moved from a resource model to an inclusion model, which has allowed opportunities for students to access the regular education curriculum. Content teachers work closely with special educators to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications, and many teachers have been trained to differentiate instruction in the classroom. The staff includes six special education case managers, one English language learner teacher, two clerical support persons, a state agency client administrator, a 504 coordinator, and the district director of special services along with ten education technicians. A social worker is assigned to work with the special education students along with speech clinicians, an occupational therapist, and a behavior specialist. All special education teachers are certified and receive the same professional training as their regular education colleagues. Along with the regular education training, special education staff members attend ongoing professional development programs. Special education staff also work with the education technicians to provide professional learning opportunities. Special education teachers work closely and effectively with the regular education staff to make sure all students are learning and are appropriately placed in learning environments to support their needs. A variety of programs are offered including the World of Work program, which offers hands on integrated learning, a functional life skills program, mainstream classes with special education support, and the learning lab. The special education content area team meets once a week as a group to discuss issues pertaining to students, and the school adheres to the federal and state laws regarding the identification, monitoring, and referral of students for special education services. Since Sacopee Valley High School has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff for identified students including special education, section 504, and the English Language Learners, students are provided with inclusive opportunities to learn based on their individual needs, improving their ability to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (observations, teachers, self-study)

**Commendations:**

1. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team's and biology teacher's willingness to provide seniors with career and college placement services outside their expected responsibilities
2. The accessibility and welcoming environment of the library to all teachers and students
3. Degree of library resources found within in the school, through inter library loan programs and through the Internet, for students and staff
4. The many intervention and support services for all students

**Recommendations:**

1. Provide an adequate number of certified/licensed guidance personnel to meet Commission guide lines
2. Develop a comprehensive written guidance plan
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure the librarian can work more closely with curriculum and the classroom teachers
4. Develop a process to collect and analyze data to continually improve support services to meet the needs of all students
5. Provide nursing services throughout the school day

## 7 Community Resources for Learning

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

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
  - a wide range of school programs and services
  - sufficient professional and support staff
  - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
  - a full range of technology support
  - sufficient equipment
  - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.
2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
  - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
  - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
  - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.
3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
  - programs and services
  - enrollment changes and staffing needs
  - facility needs
  - technology
  - capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.
5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.
6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
7. All professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

## Conclusions:

Sacopee Valley High School's community and the School Administrative District 55, its governing body, do not provide dependable funding, and many school programs have been adversely affected. School budget line items for the last few years indicate deep cuts culminating with a 2010-2011 budget that is down 17% since 2006-2007. The budget process has led to losses in the professional staff (1 art, .5 language arts, 1.5 industrial technology, .5 physical education, .5 mathematics and 1 alternative education). Because of these cuts, graduation requirements have been reduced by one credit to twenty-three. This has limited the assortment of electives available to the students. Additionally, cuts have led to study halls that contain more than sixty students. The school budget reflects that each teacher is allotted \$110 in professional development funds. Staff members indicate that this often doesn't pay for even one workshop so many staff members' report they have to fund their own professional growth. The one piece that is untouched is course reimbursement, and staff members are still entitled to take up to six college credits per fiscal year. Additionally, the school was working on aligning curriculum, but the loss of the curriculum coordinator and assistant superintendent has sidetracked this work over the last two years. Students are able to participate in the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI), which has allowed for technological growth amongst students. Students report that, if it weren't for the MLTI laptop program, many wouldn't have the luxury of technology in the home. The TV-2 program allows for a fully functioning production studio, which is funded by Time Warner Cable of Maine. This has allowed events to be broadcast live or via tape delay, and students receive experience in TV. Staff members and students report that classroom equipment is in disrepair and in need of replacement. Students report that they are limited in the amount of printing they are able to do yearly. There is a program on their laptops that lets them know when they have used up their allotted paper for the year. Both staff members and students indicate that there are insufficient instructional materials and supplies. The district's governing body is able to provide students with necessary technology in the form of the MLTI program, but until they are able to provide adequate funding for programs, personnel, professional development, curriculum revision, technology support, instructional equipment, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies, the students of Sacopee Valley High School will not be able to fully achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interview, meetings with teachers, students)

Sacopee Valley High School has developed a plan to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building, but funding to ensure repairs, replace equipment, and keep the school clean are not available at this time. Based on the Harriman Associates Study and the self-study, it is clear that Sacopee Valley High School is in need of repair, renovation, or replacement, but funding has not been secured for this to take place. The school district has filed an application to the State of Maine in order to address the issues, but at this point the school is prioritized as #38 on the list. In addition, the school district has developed a five-year plan for the buildings and grounds in the district. Staff members indicate that the plan is in place, but funding is lacking. Materials within the school are inventoried although they are catalogued each year and include: laptops, chemicals, audiovisual equipment, instructional equipment, co-curricular equipment, furniture and textbooks. Unfortunately, as a result of budget constraints, the materials in need of repair are often done without. The overall age of the materials is of concern to the staff members and students. Superficial cleaning is done nightly by the 2.5 after-school custodians. Staff members have indicated that this is basic house-keeping in terms of sweeping and taking out the trash. The cutback from three to 2.5 custodial positions has led to an overall decline in cleanliness of the building. In addition, staff members indicate that custodial morale is low due to cuts in positions, pay freezes, and furlough days. Students report that they are most proud of their outdoor athletic facilities.

They believe that these are some of the best facilities that they play on in their respective conference. The lack of adequate funding to ensure timely repairs of the facility, replace equipment, and keep the school clean is negatively affecting teaching and learning and is overall negatively impacting the school culture. The school facility and equipment needs to enhance teaching and learning; at this time, it does not, and without an appropriately funded solution, the school culture will continue to degrade, hampering the school's ability to fully achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all Sacopee Valley High School students. (observations, self-study, student shadowing, facility tour, teacher interview, meetings with teachers, school board, school leadership)

Sacopee Valley High School community does attempt to fund, and the school does propose a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, facility needs, technology needs, and capital improvements, but the funding is not currently available fund to the above needs. SVHS has implemented a pay-to-play system for athletics and co-curricular activities in an attempt to cost save and generate revenue. Policy One Research indicates that enrollment will drop over the next ten years, but district-based research suggests that enrollment will remain consistent. Staff cuts over the last two years have been in accordance with the Essential Programs and Services Funding Model. This model was influential in the rationale for the numerous position cuts. During the summer of 2010, the Capital Improvement Committee developed a plan to address preventative maintenance issues. The committee prioritized capital improvements and has a five-year plan for addressing the issues. The school district has implemented a long-range technology plan via a funding agreement with the Maine Learning Technology Initiative. Currently, SVHS implements a 1 to 1 computer model for every high school student. The district has taken the initiative to propose a long-range plan for improvements in SVHS; however without appropriate and timely funding the school will not be able to ensure that all students meet the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations. (self-study, school board, school leadership team, teachers, central office administrators)

Sacopee Valley High School's current faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The school budget is developed through a process that begins in November. Staff members are able to make requests followed by the building administrator's review. Staff members have a limited budget due to budget constraints. Staff members on average are allocated \$90 per school year for classroom supplies while science, art, technology, and physical education typically have a higher budget dictated by cost of supplies and programming. Staff members indicate that the current administration has control over the budget in respect to advocating for programs and services. Recognizing that previous reductions had a significant negative impact on students in the Jobs for Maine Graduates program, the position has been proposed to be put back in the 2011-2012 budget along with the previously cut technology support position. The faculty and building administrators of Sacopee Valley High School are involved in the development and implementation of the budget which allows staff members to have input in the allocation of funds in order to best meet the needs of all students. Regretfully, the staff members' input and the administrator's advocacy of the budget are rendered null and void when insufficient funds are available to support or enhance the classroom teachers' work. The lack of funding will continue to negatively impact Sacopee Valley High School's ability to obtain the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations until this funding dilemma is resolved. (self-study, teachers' interviews, meetings with teachers)

Sacopee Valley High School site and plant do not support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Facilities and ADA compliance issues have negatively impacted programs and services at Sacopee Valley High School. Parents, staff members, administration, community, and the school board believe that the current school does not support the delivery of high quality programs and services.

The Harriman Associates Study established significant concerns with classrooms, science labs, library media center, gym, cafeteria, and guidance area. Science labs currently have significant safety concerns. There are issues with electricity (power is erratic); sinks are not working; science hoods are not up to code or operable; and some rooms do not have the proper safety equipment (shower stations). Only 50% of the students believe that they are receiving adequate delivery of these services. The building fails to meet ADA compliance in the areas of: exterior exits and bathrooms and elevator/ chair lifts. The deficiencies in the quality of facilities keep the school from delivering the quality of programming that would help the students meet 21st century learning expectations. The ADA compliance issues create a significant equity issue for the handicapped because they cannot access significant portions of the building, denying them the opportunity to receive an education aligned with the core values and beliefs instilled at SVHS. Without funded remedies to the facility shortcomings and ADA compliance issues, the school site and plant will continue to have a negative impact on the school's ability to have all students obtain the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, student shadowing, facility tour, teacher interview, meetings with teachers, students, department leaders)

Sacopee Valley High School maintains documentation with respect to the physical plant and facility, but it is not in compliance with many federal and state laws and fire, health, and safety regulations. The school currently does not meet the Americans with Disabilities Act with respect to access to the building, bathrooms and upper floors. The Harriman Associates Study documents significant safety concerns as: asbestos flooring and ceiling tiles, lack of emergency lighting, inadequate power and technology, poor ventilation, old steam piping, worn out plumbing, lack of fire protection system, and multiple ADA inadequacies including the replacement of the current chairlift system due to its rating of 450 pounds. (Most electric wheelchairs now weigh in excess of 1000 pounds). Staff members corroborate that there are safety issues at SVHS including asbestos, science labs in disrepair, ADA requirements, significant electrical issues, and erratic heating throughout the building. The building is not in compliance with laws and regulations, which puts the health and safety of students and staff at risk and denies students the opportunity for an equitable learning experience in order to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, facility tour, teacher interview, meetings with teachers, Central Office administrators)

The professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in education and reaches out to families who have been less connected with SVHS. Sacopee Valley High School holds a Spotlight on Students each year to bring the communities together in order to showcase student learning. This event is the culminating celebratory activity, showcasing student achievement and is attended by more than 400 community members. This event is designed for the community to really get a feel for what the students are doing. The school attempts to make contact with parents through the advisory system, parent-teacher conferences, and financial aid nights. In addition, parent contact is made through co-curricular activities. SVHS is a tight knit community with community members who come out to support the students. The school also has a webpage presence, but students indicate that it is extremely slow with incomplete information. Staff members have access to the First Class e-mail system to stay in contact. The school also utilizes Connect Ed, an automated call system, to notify parents of upcoming events. Staff members have a web presence for each of their respective classrooms. Lastly, the school looks to keep the public informed through TV-2 productions of events and school-related meetings. The staff of SVHS provides a nurturing environment and actively seeks alternative ways to meet the needs of students and families not normally connected with the school. Continued efforts in this regard will allow all students and families to feel the positive connection with the high school that is necessary for them to improve their academic experience. (self-study, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Sacopec Valley High School does everything in its power to find ways to do what is best for the students and to guide them in their pursuit of greater opportunity through partnerships which support student learning. SVHS has developed partnerships with the University of Southern Maine, Southern Maine Community College, Virtual High School, and the Lake Region Vocational Center. The school has sought grants in the form of the Maine Education Loan Marketing Corporation Foundation, which allows students to visit college campuses beginning in the 9th grade. Students have indicated that it would be important to start this process beginning in the spring of their 8th grade year. Sophomore students visit Southern Maine Community College, and the school plans day trips to Boston for juniors to allow students the opportunity to see a variety of colleges in their prospective majors. Additionally, the school has a connection with St. Joseph's College that provides support to students in filling out the FAFSA and the CSS profile as seniors. Local businesses have been supportive of education in respect to funding programs throughout the school that otherwise might be cut. Sacopec Valley High School does everything in its power to meet the needs of its students and strives to enhance learning and create post-secondary opportunities. The external partnerships have contributed to an overall increase in the pursuit of post secondary education for most students. The continued use and expansion of external partnerships will serve to enhance and motivate a greater number students to pursue education beyond the protective confines of Sacopec Valley High School. (self-study, students, teachers)

**Commendations:**

1. Decision to take part in the MLTI program which provides each student of SVHS a laptop to use throughout the school year
2. Widespread recognition that there are severe limitations with the current facility and the community's stated plan to address facility needs
3. School district creation of a five-year comprehensive plan
4. Building administration that actively involves the staff in the development of the budget process
5. Family atmosphere of SVHS in which students and the community take great pride in their school and co-curricular events
6. Strong partnerships, which give SVHS students' opportunities beyond the walls of the high school

**Recommendations:**

1. Provide adequate and dependable funding for sufficient equipment, instructional materials and on-going professional development to meet the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Provide adequate support for staff members to be able to align the school and district curriculum

3. Provide adequate funding for sufficient instructional staff so students may have the ability to take a diverse course of study
4. Ensure that there is a plan and adequate funding so that equipment is properly maintained and replaced and so that the school is cleaned thoroughly on a daily basis
5. Comply with all ADA regulations as found in the Harriman Associates Study
6. Add emergency lighting and a fire protection system that meet life safety codes
7. Repair and improve the significant electrical issues
8. Address the need for asbestos abatement and replacement with compliant products
9. Address all facility deficiencies, which prevent the implementation of curriculum
10. Develop and implement a plan to ensure the school facility and physical plant meets all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations

## *FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES*

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

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change, which negatively impacts, on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact, which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 15. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report, which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

On behalf of the visiting committee and the New England Association of School and Colleges I would like to thank the entire faculty from the bottom of my heart, for the kind and caring hospitality you all showed us. Additionally, I would like to personally thank the School Board, Superintendent, the Principal, and the Assistant Principal, for the quality manner in which they cared for us during the time we spent at Sacopee Valley High School.

**Sacopee Valley High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
March 27-30, 2011**

**Visiting Committee**

Kenneth J. Healey Lisbon High School Lisbon Falls, ME 04252	Cari Medd Poland Regional High School Poland, ME 04274
Todd West Deer Isle-Stonington High School Deer Isle, ME 04627	Brenda Michaelsen Yarmouth High School Yarmouth, ME 04096
Sharon Chandler The Broomfield School Harvard, MA 01451	Colleen Mulligan Winnisquam Regional High School Tilton, NH 03276
Nicholas Gannon Lisbon High School Lisbon Falls, ME 04252	Kate Muzzy Mount Desert Island High School Mount Desert Island, ME 04660
Robyn Graziano Maranacook High School Readfield, ME 04355	Russell Schneider Hall-Dale High School Farmingdale, ME 04344
Deborah Litchfield Buckfield Jr/Senior High School Buckfield, ME 04220	Jeremie Sirois York High School York, ME 03909
Ruth Littlefield York High School York, ME 03909	Irene Titmas Foxborough High School Foxborough, MA 02035

## NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

### Commission on Public Secondary Schools

#### SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

- elimination of fine arts, practical arts and student activities
- diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities
- significantly decreased funding
- cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing
- cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- 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