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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS - 2016

November 7, 2016

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Mr. Troy McAllister
Acting Director / Head of School
Community High School of Vermont
NOB 2 South
Waterbury, VT 05671

Dear Troy:

In accordance with procedure adopted by the Commission on Independent Schools, I am enclosing a copy of the final edition of the Visiting Committee Report on Community High School of Vermont and the votes on Standards for Accreditation. After the Commission on Independent Schools has taken action on the report and notified you, the report is considered formally accepted by the Commission and may be distributed in accordance with the enclosed guidelines.

The purpose of this letter is to solicit, before Commission review, your comments as to:

1. The accuracy of the report.
2. The nature of the recommendations.
3. Any comments you might care to make about the work of the visiting committee.

Written comments will be part of the material considered by the Commission when it reviews the application for continued accreditation of Community High School of Vermont by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges at its meeting in February. If we do not receive a letter from you by November 30th, we will assume that you are satisfied with the report and that no further comment is necessary. You may email your comments to cis@neasc.org or mail a letter to our office, whichever you prefer.

Sincerely,

Jay S. Stroud
Interim Director of the Commission

JSS:cd

Enclosures: Policy on Use of Visiting Committee Reports and Notification Letters
Visiting Committee Report
Committee's Votes on Standards for Accreditation



Founded in 1885

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
Commission on Independent Schools**

Policy and Procedure for Use of Visiting Committee Reports and Notification Letters

Following an evaluation for membership or accreditation, initial or continued, the school is provided the following documents in sequence:

1. The *Visiting Committee Report* to which the school is asked to respond as to its factual accuracy, the nature of the recommendations, and comments relative to the work of the visiting committee and the votes on *Standards for Accreditation*;
2. Following Commission action, a letter from the Director of the Commission, outlining the action taken, the continuing responsibilities of the school to the Association, and the recommendations to be dealt with in future reports; and,
3. A brief letter from the President of the Association noting the action taken regarding initial membership and accreditation. These last two letters may be expected some weeks following receipt of the Visiting Committee Report.

The Visiting Committee Report and notification letters regarding Commission/Association action are the property of the school. Either the report or the notification letter may be used in whole or part by the school for external purposes. However, if excerpts are to be released to the public, they must present a balanced view of recommendations as well as commendations.

Association policy as approved by the Board of Trustees, May 12, 1978, and as amended, December 10, 1981 states:

“If something is publicly released by an institution that misrepresents or distorts the Commission recommendation, the appropriate Director of the Commission should contact the chief administrative officer of the institution and request that corrective action be taken. If the misrepresentation or distortion is not promptly corrected, the Director of the Commission should so notify the Executive Director who is the chief executive officer of the Association and who speaks on behalf of the Association.”

Neither the Association nor the Commission releases copies of any of the material relating to an individual school's evaluation without the express permission of the school. In certain cases, such as the institution seeking approval by the appropriate state department of education, or membership in or recognition by another agency, there will be sent, at the request of the Head of School, a copy of the Visiting Committee Report and the letter of notification regarding membership and accreditation from the Director of the Commission. In the event of a request being made for a research study, the material may be made available for use at the Association office only with the specific approval of the Head of School.

Within the framework of the above policy, the Commission encourages, in the spirit of inquiry and institutional improvement, access to the documents relating to the evaluation process to interested parties in the school community.



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

Community High School of Vermont

NOB 2 South
280 State Road
Waterbury, VT

Mr. Troy McAllister

Acting Director / Head of School

Mr. Dana Lesperance

Assistant Director / Assistant Head of School

Ms. Charity Baker

*Data Analyst and Information Coordinator
Self-Study Coordinator*

Chair

Mr. David Manzo

*President / Executive Director
Cotting School*

Assistant Chair

Mr. Robert LeGary, Jr.

*Head of School
The Learning Clinic*

October 23-26, 2016

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. David Manzo

President / Executive Director

Cotting School

Lexington, MA

Assistant Chair: Mr. Robert LeGary, Jr.

Head of School

The Learning Clinic

Brooklyn, CT

VC Members

Mr. Daniel Ahearn

Assistant Headmaster

Landmark School

Prides Crossing, MA

Mr. Michael Harten

Academic Dean

Woodstock Academy

Woodstock, CT

Mr. Thomas Lord

Science Teacher

Kimball Union Academy

Meriden, NH

Ms. Krista Macari

Chief Academic Officer

Cotting School

Lexington, MA

Ms. Sharon Murphy

Director of Education

Devereux Glenholme School

Washington, CT

Ms. Patricia Pond

Mathematics Teacher

Proctor Academy

Andover, NH

NEASC Introduction

Founded in 1885, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) is the nation's oldest accrediting agency. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has awarded accreditation to educational institutions in the six New England states that seek voluntary affiliation.

The governing body of NEASC is its Board of Trustees which oversees the work of four Commissions:

- Commission on International Education
- Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- Commission on Independent Schools
- Commission on Public Schools

The evaluation program which the schools undergo is a three-fold process: the self-study conducted by the school, the evaluation by the visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study (Part II), and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and the Commission. The Commission on Independent Schools oversees the entire process.

Each school is evaluated in terms of compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*, the quality of *Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion*, and how well it is serving the needs of its students. Because each school is different, the base that undergirds the evaluation is the school's own statement of mission and core values.

School Data Sheet

Mission

Community High School of Vermont assists adult students by maintaining campuses throughout the state to develop personalized learning plans and provide coordinated learning opportunities that address educational and criminogenic needs to strengthen skills in living, learning, and working.

History and Culture

The Community High School of Vermont was legislatively enacted by the State of Vermont in 1998 with Senate Bill S. 274 as an approved independent high school. Our mandated population has included youth who are under the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and who are under 23 years of age. As signed by the Governor of Vermont on June 8, 2016, House bill H. 875 (Act 172) expanded our potential enrollees to include:

All persons under the custody of the Commissioner who are under the age of 23 and have not received a high school diploma, or are assessed to have a moderate-to-high criminogenic need and are within 24 months of reentry shall participate in an education program (Vermont General Assembly, 2016).

This independent high school is unique in that it prepares students with criminogenic needs to return to their communities from facility and community campuses throughout the State of Vermont. The school serves students, of any age, who are seeking a high school education or preparing to enter the workforce. High school diplomas and workforce readiness certificates form the core of the Living, Learning and Working portfolio that serves as the culmination of students' studies.

Person(s) completing this form: Troy McAllister; Charity Baker

Date: 9/1/2016

Process Followed by School

All members of the school administration, faculty, and staff were directly involved in all phases of the study using a customized SharePoint website as our primary collaborative tool. During the fall of 2014, the entire school participated in Preparation for the Self-Study. Committees which reviewed and collected artifacts from these areas: Mission, Curriculum, and each of the Living, Learning, and Working programs. Faculty and staff were assigned to committees based on their own preferences. Students, parents, volunteers and Corrections Department staff were also invited to complete the NEASC surveys.

Based on their preferences, faculty and staff were then assigned to two sequential Part I standard review groups during 2015. We dedicated time for work on the study during monthly faculty meetings. Smaller groups met in person and through virtual audiovisual meetings (see Standard 15 for additional detail). Part II of the Self-Study was also completed through a schoolwide effort on April 4, 2016. Each local Educational Support Team (EST) spent the day reflecting on Part I of the Self Study, choosing the most significant findings of the study and making

recommendations based on those findings.

Overview of School Findings

After reviewing Part I of the Self Study, it is evident that the school has had to creatively adapt to changes within state government as well as the changing demographic and educational needs of our students. This has precipitated conversations within the State Legislature that are evolving from simple budget reduction pressures to restructuring of the school. Leadership of the Department of Corrections, and the school within it, has been restructured multiple times over the past decade as a result of these changes.

To meet the changing demographic and educational needs of our students, the school has modified its enrollment, assessment, planning, and delivery of educational services. Our program now systematically focuses on the education of adult learners with criminogenic needs. Recent research in correctional best practices now informs the school as to which offenders will most likely benefit from the education and work opportunities that we offer. Assessment and planning have been standardized throughout the school to provide consistency and create portfolios that adult learners can put to future use.

Introduction

Thanks to School

The Visiting Team is deeply grateful to the Community High School of Vermont for its warm hospitality. Our team was welcomed on a crisp fall Sunday (October 23, 2016) afternoon for an informative tour of two facilities (Caledonia Community Work Camp and the Northeast Regional Correctional Facility) and a delightful dinner. There were approximately 40 people in attendance including staff, teachers, administrators and advisory board members. Many of the participants drove long distances on a school night to meet with the team. The team appreciated their efforts, their enthusiasm for the school and their warm welcome. The tour provided an overview of two key facilities.

The Visiting Team found numerous impressive practices housed in both correctional and community based environments. The School's efforts to serve a range of students is supported by many veteran staff combined with enthusiastic new team members. Community High School of Vermont staff are highly engaged, clearly motivated and show a strong interest in and caring for their students.

The Visiting Team was clearly moved by the warmth and dedication of the Community High School of Vermont family. The following comments are indicative of the pride and spirit of this community:

"There is a belief in the restorative value of education and a genuine empathy for the students."

"It's not only about graduation, it's about students getting better."

"Our teachers are saints. There is nothing they would not do for us."

"If it's not offered, the teacher will find a way to offer it."

"They will bring things from home to meet educational needs."

"Teachers go the extra mile."

"We move faster in our curriculum than the local public schools."

"The school is the human element here at the prison."

"Every educator I ever worked with, every one has been helpful. It's been a great experience. I'm so happy to be here."

"Out of all the times I've been in, all my teachers have helped me. I'm not the smartest kid in math, I get ticked off sometimes. I get frustrated, and my teacher offered to help me out. I'm glad the teachers are there to help you."

The Community High School has the ability to adapt to changing situations. This quality was noted in the revised mission statement in the face of draconian cuts in its budget over multiple years (5 years of cuts, 48% decrease in staff). There is a "growth" mindset. Community High School of Vermont is committed to both student and staff growth. With a plan to increase students by 36% beginning in December 2016, flexibility, teamwork and communication are essential.

The Visiting Team extends our deepest thanks to Kim Bushey, Director of Program Services, Troy McAllister, the Interim Head of School, Dana Lesperance, Assistant Head of School and Charity Baker, Coordinator of the Self-Study, all members of the NEASC Self-Study Committee and everyone involved in multiple years of preparation for our visit. The Visiting Team appreciated the grace with which Charity completed the complex task and her

rapid response to our requests for information. We were especially thankful for the staff's willingness to transport us. Having multiple hours with Troy, Dana, Charity and Jerry Schartner, in the car gave us an in-depth look at the Community High School of Vermont from the perspectives of its leadership.

Overview of Team Findings

All Standards received a passing recommendation from the Visiting Team.

Four (4) Standards received a rating of P1 (meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection). Eleven (11) Standards received a rating of P2 (meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection).

Please Note: A number of commendations and recommendations are repeated under different standards. This was purposeful, as it gives the reader and the Community High School of Vermont Standards Committee Members direct feedback for each standard.

The Visiting Team recommends, without reservation, that the Community High School of Vermont receive full accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The NEASC Banner should fly proudly over the grounds of Community High School of Vermont.

Standard 1: Mission

Standard

There is congruence between the school's stated mission and core values and its actual program, policies, planning, and decision-making at both the operational and governance levels.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

The Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT), accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the Vermont State Board of Education (VTSBE), is an academic and technical high school. This statewide school operates within the Vermont Department of Corrections (VTDOC).

As stated on their website:

Students are under the custody of the Commissioner of the VTDOC; therefore, the design, operation, and continuous improvement of this school are tailored to the context of corrections and provides programs that balance public safety and security with the educational needs of its students. The guiding belief of Corrections Education and CHSVT is that all academic and vocational educational services shall adhere to high standards of purpose, empowerment, self-directed decision-making, excellence, recognition, integrity, and diversity. Our educational programs and services, therefore, offer a choice of learning activities and opportunities to a diverse adult student population. Upon completion of all requirements, students earn a high school diploma and, in many cases, industry-recognized credentials.

A brief history gives context to the founding of the school and its evolution: The education program [within the Vermont Department of Corrections] was started in January of 1984.

At that time there were six correctional facilities and about a half dozen part time educators. The focus was library services, assessments and the GED program. It was known as Corrections Education.

In 1998, Act 274 was established, which changed the program to an approved Independent School where students could receive official high school diplomas. This is also when the school changed its name to the Community High School of Vermont.

The mission statement was adopted in 1999, soon after CHSVT became an Independent School where students could receive a high school diploma. The 1999 edition states that the school existed: "...to provide quality educational services responsive to Academic, Vocational, and Social needs of Vermont residents without a basic education; to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to function as meaningful participants in the community."

The first revision of the mission took place in 2006. The 2006 mission statement reads: "The mission of the Community High School of Vermont is to provide an accredited, coordinated and personalized education that assists students in their academic, social, and vocational successes."

In addition, the school's website states:

The guiding belief of CHSVT is that all academic and vocational educational services shall adhere to high standards of purpose, empowerment, self-directed decision-making, excellence, recognition, reward, integrity, and diversity.

Our educational programs and services offer a choice of learning activities and opportunities to a widely diverse adult student population. Students are offered a myriad of opportunities to expand their learning, knowledge, and application of skills in academic coursework and applied learning settings.

Career & Technical Education is offered in the career pathways of automotive technology, welding & fabrication, construction trades, horticulture, culinary & hospitality, printing, graphic arts, and technology.

All coursework and programs are available to students earning a high school diploma and to those with a diploma seeking to improve skills and employment opportunities.

Whether working toward a high school diploma or seeking to improve skills, CHSVT is a place that offers students the opportunity to:

Obtain reading, writing, and math skills necessary for the 21st Century;

- Acquire life and vocational skills;*
- Experience structured and disciplined study as the norm;*
- Have genuine opportunity to complete high school;*
- Master the essential skills necessary to be a productive citizen, including daily habits of attendance, learning, and responsibility;*
- Integrate community-based educational services, job opportunities, and job training to support the transition of individuals back to Vermont communities.*

The Community High School of Vermont primarily serves students who:

- Have not obtained a high school diploma and are under the custody of the Department of Corrections (DOC);*
- Have a high need in the area of employment, as identified by DOC classification procedures.*
- Additional Factors:*
- Under Vermont state law, all individuals under the age of 23, under the custody of the DOC, and without high school diplomas, have a mandatory education requirement. These students are enrolled upon admission.*

It is the policy of CHSVT to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living in accordance with all state and federal laws and regulations including IDEA, ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Pursuant to VT Agency of Education Special Education Regulations, LRE, and certain IEP requirements may be adjusted due to the nature of the student's placement. Reasonable accommodations, modifications, and services will be provided

to entitled individuals to enable them to access or benefit from the educational program. All notice and due process requirements of the above-mentioned laws are provided.

The current mission was developed between October 2014 and February 2015 and states the following:

The Community High School of Vermont assists adult students by maintaining campuses throughout the state to develop personalized learning plans and provide coordinated learning opportunities that address educational and criminogenic needs to strengthen skills in living, learning, and working. The following information from a June 2015 survey conducted by the CHSVT, which had a response rate of 77% (59% from the campus facilities, 22% from the community campuses, and 19% from administration) sheds light on the community's adoption of the revised mission statement.

Observations

Through observations, interviews, surveys and review of documentation, the Visiting Team concluded the school is fully committed to the school's mission and vision. There is a positive atmosphere in all areas of the school which contributes to a deep sense of purpose for the students in their care. Faculty, staff and administrators were able to communicate the mission of CHSVT. Therefore, the mission of the CHSVT is embraced by all constituencies and linked to all aspects of school operations.

The Visiting Team noted that the mission is applied to professional practice in the following areas:

- Awareness of students' needs
- Planning Living, Learning, Working plans
- Topics/sub-topics for discussion in class
- Awareness of and approaches to addressing student behavior
- Value of using Habits of Mind
- Evaluation of student progress
- Reflection on one's own disposition toward the job of teaching at CHSVT
- Communicating about CHSVT to others including the community at large and VT legislators

The mission encompasses the dual purposes of offering an accredited high school education and providing risk-reducing interventions within the Vermont Department of Corrections to decrease recidivism. As a result, student experience and outcomes are more broadly encompassed to incorporate the living, learning and working dimensions of their lives. The mission of incorporating living, learning and work was clearly stated in the school's logo which can be found at each campus.

In addition, the Visiting Team found that the mission is more fully articulated as *all students are expected to create a Living, Learning and Working portfolio for high school completion that documents their proficiency in all these domains. A student handbook is given to students and they receive a personal orientation to the school. Requirements and expectations of school administration, faculty and staff are clearly outlined in Department of Corrections' directives and school manuals and on-going training by the school and the department.*

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the Self Study on a rating of P1. The Community High School of Vermont has a clear understanding of its mission and there is congruence between the school's stated mission and core values

and its actual program, policies, planning, and decision-making.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. The newly revised mission of the CHSVT accurately reflects the school's purpose of the school. As stated by the CHSVT, *our students' needs are the focus of our new mission.*
2. The CHSVT *is within state government as part of the Agency of Human Services (AHS) and Department of Corrections (DOC). Importantly, its mission reflects both the work the CHSVT accomplishes as a school and the vision and mission of its agency and department.*
3. The mission is lived out in the belief in the restorative value of education and a genuine empathy for the students.
4. The Habits of the Mind curriculum brings the mission of the school to life and can be found in all classrooms.

Recommendation 1

Although over the last 19 years, the mission has been reviewed and revised twice with input from the entire staff, the Mission Statement should be formally reviewed annually by the administrative team and the advisory board. In addition, each campus site should post a copy of the 2015 mission statement in a visual location. At some locations, the visiting team found copies of the 2006 mission statement posted.

Recommendation 2

The school should address the culture shift within the school and its role within the Department of Corrections with the goal of helping the corrections community to embrace the CHSVT mission as a school that is, designed to meet the educational needs of Vermont offenders.

Recommendation 3

The school should have a formal timeline and systematic review process to ensure adherence to its mission through quantitative and qualitative data sources. Careful attention should be paid to significant changes to the AHS and/or DOC missions, populations served, or priority changes.

Standard 2: Governance

Standard

The school has an appropriate system of governance that assures that the school remains true to its mission and that it has the necessary resources to support its present and prospective operations.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

CHSVT is committed to remaining true to its mission, as well as the changing needs of its students. With this in mind, CHSVT is continually reviewing its mission and finding ways to best meet the defined goals. Additionally, CHSVT remains open to change. When it became apparent that CHSVT had met its previous mission statement, the school administration, faculty and staff spent considerable time and effort exploring what the new mission should be. The current mission statement clearly and concisely reflects these efforts.

All faculty members are currently in the process of receiving a detailed two-year plan of evaluation, as well as summaries of the required criteria to be met.

School policies are reviewed annually by school administration. Faculty input is gathered through monthly Faculty Meetings, where administrators and faculty members exchange ideas. In addition, the CHSVT Coordinating Council (C3) is a group of faculty and staff who were elected by their colleagues that meets regularly with Head of School to discuss policy needs and recommend changes as necessary.

The governing body demonstrates and clearly communicates its commitment to the mission via the administrative team's monthly faculty meetings, frequent campus visits, and email correspondence. Faculty and staff also regularly present and share information and resources that support our mission during monthly faculty meetings and through email correspondence.

Since 2011, participation of all constituencies in the policy-making process occurs through the development of ad hoc committees. Typically, this has been on a voluntary basis, where staff who are interested in being part of the policy-making process are able to review policy changes and give feedback on new and or revised policies.

At the March 4, 2016 faculty meeting, the school administrators proposed the formation of a CHSVT Coordinating Committee (C3) of faculty and staff to complement the knowledge and skills of the formal leaders in order to more effectively govern the organization. The idea was approved by consensus and elections were held to include representatives from each facility (7) and community campuses (1), Special Education faculty (1), and Central Office staff (1). The first C3 meeting was held on March 18, 2016.

Due to the nature of our school being located within a Department that is within an Agency within the State of Vermont executive branch, there are many layers of multi-year plans. While we review those plans to ensure that we are in compliance, we have not been engaged in school specific multi-year planning. We have begun to develop a plan for integrating school services with the program services offered by the Department of Corrections. We began conversations as a larger group in March 2016 to identify commonalities in services and explore potential models of collaboration. The task for fiscal year 2017 is to create a single referral form and integrated services plan with full implementation in fiscal year 2018. The school has contacted outside sources to provide professional development over the course of a multi-year plan. Faculty has the ability through the My Learning Plan (MLP) online application to determine their own professional development plan for licensure re-certifications.

The Head of School at CHSVT does not simply report to a board of trustees. Within the Department of Corrections, the Head reports to the Director of Program Services and works collaboratively with the other direct reports to integrate school services with risk reduction services, victim services, offender case management and offender work programs. The Director of Program Services is part of an executive team that consists of security, policy and operations directors who report to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. The Commissioner of Corrections reports to the Agency of Human Services management which includes the Secretary who is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. In addition, there is a governor appointed advisory board for the school. The Head of School meets with them periodically to review programs and policies and solicit their advice. Finally, the Vermont General Assembly (legislature) sets much of the policy framework and budget for the school, so the Head is often called upon during the legislative session to provide information, give testimony and work with ad hoc sub-committees regarding a variety of issues.

Observations

Overview

The Governing Structure of the Community High School of Vermont is unique on many levels.

The Community High School of Vermont operates on an annual budget funded by the State Agency of Education, via General Fund, Title1, IDEA-B and Carl Perkins grant funds. The State Legislature enacts the statutes which mandate the existence of CHSVT. The Secretary of the Agency of Education works closely with the Administrators of the school to ensure that CHSVT meets State Education requirements. Finally, the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections directs daily operations within the facilities, and initiates the directives to insure that the statutes are enforced. Despite this somewhat complicated relationship, CHSVT remains dedicated to its mission of providing coordinated learning opportunities and assisting students in developing personalized plans that address their criminogenic needs in living, learning, and working.

As established by the Legislature, the CHSVT is located within the general umbrella of the Vermont Department of Corrections which, in turn, is within the Vermont Agency of Human Services. This initial layer of governing structure highlights one of the first unique features of the CHSVT in that it signals the State's commitment to rehabilitation and health/human services to the prison population instead of opting, as is the case in the majority of states, to isolate the Department of Corrections as a separate entity focused primarily on containment and incarceration. The Department of Corrections, in turn, provides the direct Governing Structure for the CHSVT.

The actual chain of command is as follows. The Commissioner of the Department supervises the Deputy Director who, in turn, supervises the Director of Program Services. The Director of Program Services then supervises the Director of Corrections Education, who is the Head of School of the CHSVT. The Director of Program Services also supervises other key programs. This relatively new supervisory structure is designed to ensure coordination of services and to facilitate communication among these previously "siloed" elements of

DOC.

There are three other distinct features of the Governing Structure that merit mention. First, there is a DOC Senior Management Team comprised of the Deputy Commissioner, Facilities Director, Finance Director, General Counsel, Administrative Services Director, Health Services Director, the Field Services Director, and the Director of Program Services. This Management Team provides general guidance, philosophical direction, and direct strategic decisions relating to the DOC and, as a related entity, to the CHSVT.

The second distinct feature of the CHSVT Governing Structure is the presence of an Advisory Board. This Board, which is appointed by the Governor and meets periodically, has no power to actually direct the CHSVT. It does, however, provide key input and guidance to the CHSVT Head of School. It also serves as a valuable institutional "keeper" of the mission of the CHSVT and offers an important ability to communicate the CHSVT mission to outside constituents at the executive and legislative branches of the Vermont government.

The final distinct feature of the CHSVT Governing Structure is its relationship with the Vermont Agency of Education. Although, the AOE provides no direct oversight of the CHSVT, it does license the CHSVT and its teaching staff. Moreover, *the Secretary of the Agency of Education works closely with the Administrators of the school to ensure that CHSVT meets State Education requirements.* In sum, the CHSVT Governing Structure can appear, at first glance, to be complicated. In essence, however, the Governing Structure can best be summarized as follows: 1) the Head of School reports directly to the DOC Director of Program Services; and 2) the Head of School receives guidance and advice via the Advisory Board.

Visiting Team General Observations

Through observations, interviews, surveys and review of documentation, the Visiting Team observed unwavering and enthusiastic support for the creation, mission, and support of the CHSVT at each and every level of the Governing Structure.

DOC Senior Management Team At this level, the Visiting Team noted that each member of the Management Team recognized the importance of the CHSVT and understood its mission. They noted that the CHSVT allowed students to make both educational and social/emotional progress in the CHSVT, that the students' investment in their educational future improved their risk analysis in prison, and that CHSVT involvement also decreased the incidence of recidivism in the prison population. The Visiting Team was impressed that the Management Team identified that one of the core strengths of the CHSVT was its ability and flexibility to address the individual needs of students.

The Management Team also echoed a key message heard by the Visiting Team from the CHSVT teachers: that student improvement and CHSVT results cannot always be tied to a diploma. Finally, the Management Team noted that the CHSVT, in its external programs, meets a need not always addressed by adult education programs and also provides the only opportunity for some populations (i.e., sexual offenders) to receive any educational services. The Management Team also displayed a deep understanding of the myriad challenges facing the CHSVT, and DOC, in operating campuses within a corrections facility: space for programming, security concerns, population movement, mid-semester transfers, undiagnosed disabilities, and the illusion of time (that actual educational contact hours can actually be quite limited both in prison and in/out of prison settings). In this context, the Management Team displayed an understanding of the need to justify the CHSVT need for both maintaining, and potentially increasing, resources by collecting data for the Legislature to review.

Director of Programs Services As the direct supervisor of the CHSVT Head of School, the Director plays a key role in the direction of the CHSVT. The Visiting Team was highly impressed that the Director evidenced a strong support for the CHSVT and its mission as well as a recognition of the broader picture of how to best integrate the CHSVT with other elements of the DOC so as to better ensure delivery of services to students. Through the recent reorganization of this division of DOC, the Visiting Team observed that the Head of School and faculty members believed that the Director has made significant progress in a very short period of time in earning the trust and confidence of the CHSVT administration and faculty.

Advisory Board Though the Board has limited power to dictate policy for the CHSVT, the Board plays an absolutely vital role in the mission of the CHSVT. The Visiting Team was struck by the passion and commitment of the three board members who made a significant effort to attend the welcoming dinner for the Visiting Team and to spend time that night discussing the CHSVT. Moreover, a Board member also spent additional time with the Visiting Team in a follow up meeting and articulated clear and compelling insights about the CHSVT mission and its importance to students. Of note, the Board also displayed knowledge about gaps in the CHSVT such as the uneven distribution of resources across programs.

Visiting Team Specific Observations

The Visiting Team observed that the CHSVT mission is crafted carefully and thoughtfully as evidenced by its most recent revision in 2016. When meeting with Senior Management, the Administration, and with Faculty, the Visiting Team noted that all constituents were familiar with, and understood the implications of, the new mission statement.

Regarding stability and transitions in leadership, the Visiting Team noted, as reflected in the CHSVT self study, that this past year has been a challenging year for the CHSVT with the changes in leadership and with the reorganization within the DOC. However, the Visiting Team observed that there appears to be increased stability with the appointment of the interim Head of School and increasing familiarity with the new DOC organizational structure. Though there always remains the possibility of change due to elections and state budget decisions, the Visiting Team noted the commitment of the DOC Management Team to maintain the stability in leadership of the CHSVT for both the short and long term.

As the CHSVT notes in its Self Study, there are multiple layers of multi-year plans within the varying structures of state government around the CHSVT. Nonetheless, the Visiting Team commends the CHSVT and its Governing Structure for seeking a more defined level of planning in order to more effectively guide the CHSVT moving forward. For example, the CHSVT self study notes the need for professional development planning which the Visiting Team firmly endorses. Another example of a long term plan includes a technology plan.

Regarding the assurance of financial resources, the Visiting Team noted that this theme arose consistently in its meetings with all interested parties. All components of the Governing Structure are aware of the budget cuts that have impacted the CHSVT and its ability to meet its mission. Though all members of the Administrative team and the CHSVT faculty are committed to do more with less, the Visiting Team recommends that the Administrative team continue to collect data necessary to support its need for additional financial resources to support the CHSVT and its mission.

Regarding CHSVT policies, *school policies are reviewed annually by school administration. Faculty input is gathered through monthly Faculty Meetings, where administrators and faculty members exchange ideas. In addition, the CHSVT Coordinating Council (C3) is a group of faculty and staff who were elected by their colleagues that meets regularly with Head of School to discuss policy needs and recommend changes as necessary.* Based on interviews with the CHSVT administration and some members of the Faculty, the Visiting Team notes that this new C3 meeting mechanism holds great promise as an effective and collaborative mechanism for the CHSVT and its faculty to review and implement policy changes and share global concerns of faculty and CHSVT centers.

To the Visiting Team's knowledge, there is no mechanism for the self-evaluation of the Governing Structure. Though potentially difficult due to the complicated Governing Structure of the CHSVT, the Visiting Team believes that some form of self evaluation should occur, especially given the relatively new governing structure changes in both reporting and staffing.

Communication is done by the administrative team through monthly faculty meetings, frequent campus visits, and email correspondence. Faculty and staff also regularly present and share information and resources that support our mission during monthly faculty meetings and through email correspondence. The Visiting Team notes that

although the administrative team does communicate the mission to faculty, there are other elements of the Governing Structure that may wish to develop a periodic mechanism to connect directly with Faculty on its commitment to the mission. For example, the Visiting Committee was struck by the expressed dedication to the CHSVT mission exhibited by the Senior Management Team. Given the recent history of budget reductions, it would be important for the Faculty to hear of the Senior Management's commitment to the future of the CHSVT.

As noted earlier, the Visiting Team commends the formation of the C3 group as a new mechanism to ensure participation of all constituencies, especially given the geographic dispersal of the program. This meeting group coupled with the monthly full day faculty meeting represent significant accomplishments for the Administrative Team, the Faculty, and the CHSVT. As the CHSVT notes in its Self Study, there are multiple layers of multi-year plans within the varying structures of state government around the CHSVT. *While we review those plans to ensure that we are in compliance, we have not been engaged in school specific multi-year planning. The task for fiscal year 2017 is to create a single referral form and integrated services plan with full implementation in fiscal year 2018.* The Visiting Team commends the CHSVT and its Governing Structure for seeking a more defined level of planning in order to more effectively guide the CHSVT moving forward.

Although there is a potentially complicated reporting structure for the Head of the School, the Visiting Committee recommends that the Head of the School be provided with sufficient autonomy to exercise appropriate leadership of the CHSVT moving forward. This leadership will be particularly important as the CHSVT navigates changes in its mission and its place within the re-organized reporting structure of the DOC.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the CHSVT Self Study that the CHSVT has made significant progress in ensuring that it has a system of governance that assures that the CHSVT remains true to its mission. The CHSVT pays careful attention to the crafting of its mission statement and ensures that all constituents understand the mission. Moreover, all levels within the system of governance expressed a strong commitment, including necessary resources as needed and justified, to supporting the CHSVT in fulfillment of the mission.

The Visiting Team does recommend that the CHSVT pay continued attention to the need to collect data about the CHSVT achievements and progress. In addition and given the fairly complex governing structure of the CHSVT, the governing system should continue ongoing efforts to improve overall communication within the governing structure and the CHSVT itself. Finally, there is a need for more coordinated short and long term planning, especially given the particularly complex and unique governing structure, to ensure that the CHSVT can continue to fulfill its mission.

Commendations

1. The the Governing Structure of the School (Senior Management, Director of Program Services, Advisory Board and Head of School) exhibit a clear understanding of the CHSVT mission.
2. The DOC Senior Management Team espoused a deep understanding of the CHSVT unique strengths, its place with the Department of Correction and the need for continued support of the CHSVT.
3. The Director of Program Services grasped the need for increased planning and coordination to better serve students and to better support the CHSVT and its mission.

4. The Advisory Board displayed a strong passion for the CHSVT mission and a willingness to convey the need to support the CHSVT through meeting with CHSVT personnel, DOC personnel and the Legislature.
5. The Head of the School possesses a clear, thoughtful, and compassionate understanding of the institutional needs of the CHSVT, the resources needed for the Faculty, and the overall need for clearer communication with all constituencies of the CHSVT.
6. *The School embraces self-reflection and feedback from all faculty members, and uses this information for the purpose of promoting positive change, thus creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness and integrity for the entire school community.*
7. *The School is committed to being proactive in securing its place within the Education community, as well as the Department of Corrections, by continuing to plan ways to engage the State Legislature and lobby for our continued growth and success.*

Recommendation 1

The Governing Structure of the CHSVT ensure the ongoing formal short and long term plans are completed and implemented on multiple fronts including leadership, staffing, resources, and technology.

Recommendation 2

The Administration pay increased attention to the collection of data to support the decisions needed to move the CHSVT forward in fulfilling its mission.

Recommendation 3

The Governing Structure increase communication among the DOC management team, the administration, the faculty, and key outside constituencies (Legislature).

Recommendation 4

The School continue to work to overcome the geographical barriers that in the past have negatively affected its ability to provide a sustainable governance structure.

Recommendation 5

The School continue to focus on consistent governance across settings, given that the School operates from multiple campuses in different types of correctional settings. These settings, within both correctional facilities and probation and parole offices, have their own cultural and operational dynamics that must be reconciled to improve campus-wide effectiveness.

Standard 3: Enrollment

Standard

The admissions process assures that those students who enroll are appropriate, given the school's mission, and are likely to benefit from their experience at the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

CHSVT serves offenders under the care and custody of the Commissioner of Corrections, and our students receive Corrections Education services based on academic and vocational need. This includes three distinct populations within the Department of Corrections – students who are incarcerated, on parole, or on probation (Community High School of Vermont, 2015a).

- *Those individuals, regardless of educational level, who do not have academic, social or technical skills that will allow them to successfully participate in the community upon release, supported by the Department of Corrections' risk assessment and case planning process.*
- *Title 28 VSA §120 (a) – persons who have not completed secondary education which supports every Vermonter's right to an education regardless of their age. This statute was amended by the 2015-2016 State Legislature to also include those who are assessed to have a moderate-to-high criminogenic need by one or more Corrections risk assessments.*
- *Title 28 VSA §120 (f) All persons...who are under the age of 23 and have not received their diploma, or, as legislatively amended in 2016, are assessed to have a moderate-to-high criminogenic need and are within 24 months of reentry. While there is no upper age limit, the school does not admit students under the age of 16 (Community High School of Vermont, 2014b, p. 17).*

CHSVT teachers enroll students in school when they arrive at a campus in accordance with the CHSVT Procedure Manual (Community High School of Vermont, 2014, p. 15). Faculty register new students in the orientation class (Making Appropriate Goals and Introducing Community High School, or M.A.G.I.C) and create an individualized Living, Learning, Working plan with each new student. This assures that students will receive a personalized educational program according to their needs. By having students create a Living, Learning, Working plan designed around their strengths, interests and need areas, students take an active role in achieving success in Living, Learning, and Working. – (see CHSVT Mission Statement).

With a few exceptions due to safety concerns, we welcome all students who qualify for enrollment under Vermont law into our classrooms. We have an extensive notice of non-discrimination, in accordance with the U.S.

Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, that reflects this inclusiveness:

Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with CHSVT are hereby notified that this school does not discriminate in the operation of any of its programs, services, or facilities on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, positive HIV/Hepatitis-related blood test results, genetic information, gender identity or expression, criminal offense or status as a disabled veteran, recently separated veteran, active duty wartime or campaign badge veteran, or Armed Forces service medal veteran (collectively "protected veterans"), as these terms are defined under applicable law, or any other factor or characteristic protected by law (Community High School of Vermont, 2014b, p. 13).

Observations

The Visiting Team noted that the school has its mission visible in many locations throughout the buildings and in its print materials. (At some locations, the 2006 mission statement was visible and should be updated.)

The Visiting Team understands the referral/enrollment process as follows: Students are referred to the campus program through their case manager, probation or parole officer. Referrals are determined either by the absence of a diploma or through an identified need as assessed by one or more corrections risk assessments to have a moderate-to-high criminogenic need in either the vocational or educational arena. Additionally, students may request their case manager to participate in the campus program. Families are not involved in the referral and enrollment process as all students are adults and many have no family involvement.

The Visiting Team was told of a new single point referral system that is currently under development. Teachers report that currently students who are under the age of 23 and do not have a diploma are referred quickly to the school program. Other students referral times range for a couple of weeks while new admissions adjust and are assessed by corrections faculty to some students that reported waiting over a year for their caseworker referral.

Enrollment is completed by the teaching faculty once a referral has been made. This approach helps to support the teacher student relationship from the start with each new enrollment. The enrollment process is fully explained in the student handbook. At this time, efforts are made by the registrar to gain past educational information, testing, IEPs and/or transcripts. Due to the the transient nature of many of the students, it is not always possible to obtain this information. In these circumstances, a student interview is the most effective means of acquiring educational information. Students who have identified special education needs and services are reviewed by the Educational Support Team (EST) to determine accommodations and needed services when developing their personalized learning plan.

All student information relating to the enrollment is entered by the responsible teacher in the DOC's Focus data bank. Once enrolled, CHSVT can transfer student's enrollment and information as well as current work in the program to any of the other correctional or community based campuses within the CHSVT if they are moved within the system or become eligible for furlough, probation or parole. Once enrolled in a program, students may continue in a community based program until they achieve graduation even if they have served all their time, probationary period, or parole period.

The school's profile is determined by the Vermont DOC policies that define those students who CHSVT is required to serve. The Visiting Team found evidence that CHVST collected information regarding current graduation status of their population by age and correctional institution. They do not currently use this information in their school profile.

The Visiting Team's observations and interviews found evidence that in addition to the students whose

attendance is mandatory in the school program, many of the students enrolled in the program, voluntarily attend the campus program even after graduation and certificate programs had been achieved.

Beginning in December of this year, all DOC clients, even those who have graduated from high school, but who have been identified as having moderate to high criminogenic need will be required to participate in CHSVT programs at either the regional centers or in the community centers. This new directive is expected to cause an increase in referral and enrollment to the campus over time.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study. CHSVT has enrollment guidelines that clearly identify those students eligible for school programming.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. The Visiting Team commends CHSVT on its inclusive nature for allowing all interested clients to enroll in the school regardless of high school graduation status, sentencing status or age.
2. The Visiting Team commends the CHSVT teachers on their involvement in the enrollment process as a means to establish the student/teacher relationship from the first contact with students and their efforts to provide a highly individualized and personalized learning plan for each student.

Recommendation 1

Continued work is needed regarding the timely and accurate assessment and referral of all offenders with a criminogenic need to education and/or employment. It appears that standardization of this process is needed. The process should help to provide consistency and improve the time frames that some students are currently waiting to be referred and enrolled. Greater communication and coordination between the case managers and the education faculty will be needed for this system to be successful. Additional training may be necessary related to new statutory and procedural systems and databases.

Recommendation 2

Update the the enrollment procedure in the procedure manual to include process, codes, reasons for dropping(exit interview), procedure for ages 16-18 and guardian process.

Recommendation 3

Additionally, The Visiting Team recommends CHSVT continue to implement the reorganization and communication across the DOC so that the key components of education, case management, confinement and external services (upon release) are coordinated in a meaningful way for students that supports timely referral, enrollment and communications of needs for students both in the programs and in the community.

Standard 4: Program

Standard

The school provides a comprehensive program of intellectual, aesthetic, and physical activities that is appropriate to support the school's mission and core values, and is consistent with the needs of the range of students admitted. Program planning is informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful and constructive lives.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

The CHSVT educational program promotes civic engagement, self-directed learning, and workforce development to a widely diverse adult student population. Students are offered a variety of opportunities to expand their knowledge and improve their skills by way of traditional academic classes, independent study, and applied learning. Students may earn:

- *a high school diploma*
- *industry-recognized credentials, and*
- *a workforce readiness certificate.*

As an evidence-based corrections education risk reduction program promoting pro-social behaviors, CHSVT is recognized as an International Learning Community of Excellence by the Institute for Habits of Mind (Institute for Habits of Mind, 2015).

Individual Living, Learning, and Working plans are created by each student with the help of teachers at the student's campus. The goals in the plan are based on the identified needs and interests of the student and are reviewed each quarter and revised as needed. Students work at their own pace and may or may not be independently working on projects of personal interest. Teachers adapt to the varying needs of the student and offer classes and one-on-one instruction that is responsive at any particular point in time. Flexibility in planning is required, as students who live in correctional facilities often move from one location to another at a moment's notice.

All enrolled students are required to develop a three-part portfolio, incorporating the components of Living, Learning, and Working. The contents of these portfolios demonstrate the students' ability to take on the role of active citizenship, their proficiency with Common Core learning standards, and their readiness to enter the workforce. The final product for high school graduation and workforce readiness, the completed portfolio, is

presented by the student during a presentation to a review committee. The committee scores the presentation and either recommends that the student graduate or suggests further actions.

Observations

Program Content and Delivery

The Visiting Team clearly and consistently observed the commitment and dedication of the staff to meeting the programmatic needs of the students. The strengths of the program are found in the deep respect the faculty have for the students as adult learners, recognition of the unique needs of the student population, and delivery of specialized and individualized instruction to help each learner maximize their success. The Visiting Team fully agreed with the assertion in the Self-Study that *personal attention is paid to each student from the day of enrollment through the student's assessment and planning process.*

The student body at CHSVT is unique, and the school is presented with many challenges in fulfilling its mission programmatically, yet the teachers accept and embrace this. One of the consistent themes heard by the Visiting Team from staff and students was the critical role of the relationships between students and teachers in helping students to achieve programmatic goals. Many, if not most, of the students at CHSVT have historically had negative experiences at school and experienced trauma in their lives. The staff at CHSVT meet the students where they are and see them as learners first and inmates second. Many of the staff and students described that they did not feel like they were in jail when they were in school. The teachers meet the students where they are, build trust and believe in the students as learners. The CHSVT staff live the principle that a deep understanding of the student population and their specific needs is the cornerstone of delivering any good educational program.

The CHSVT staff do their best to provide flexible programming to meet those specific needs and should be commended for their focus in this area. The staff readily recognize that their students are adult learners and as such need to direct their own learning. There is also a philosophical and ideological shift occurring in accordance with the recent revision of the mission to include addressing the criminogenic needs of the population. The CHSVT staff should be commended for their thoughtful revision of their mission to more accurately reflect the goals of the mission. While it continues to be the case that criminogenic needs are addressed through programming services provided through the Department of Corrections, the shift reflects a growing emphasis on a holistic consideration of the therapeutic and educational needs of the student.

An important example of such a tool to address these needs is programming that has occurred to integrate Habits of Mind into the school culture. It was clear that Habits of Mind has been embraced by the community as a way to support students finding alternate and constructive ways to think and reflect on their behavior and approach interactions with others. The widespread use of Habits of Mind demonstrates awareness on the part of CHSVT of the need to address not only academic content in their programming, but provide particular tools to help students to be successful as learners and in their lives. In addition to strategies such as Habits of Mind, *teachers are free to develop classes, workshops and other learning opportunities that expose students to diverse ideas, other customs, regions and ways of living.*

Many teachers both praised the school's willingness to offer creative courses that are interesting and meaningful to their students and expressed the wish to be able to expand their program options. There was clear reflection about courses that would best prepare students to lead productive lives upon re-entry into the community and provide them with tools to prevent re-offending. In particular, many teachers spoke with the Visiting Team about the need for class content that has practical application to support possible future vocational opportunities, such as Construction Math. This seems especially salient as CHSVT students are adults who will need to find employment upon release and staff report a positive correlation between employment and reduced recidivism. Some staff described the activities in the Work Camps as both giving students a place to apply their knowledge and skills as well as helping them identify and be more motivated to address academic skills that could help them

to be more successful in the workplace. However, given that that Work Camp is not part of the CHSVT program, vocational training and programming for all students does not automatically include the range of potential opportunities that are available in the Work Camp program. Clearly, the program recognized this importance of workforce readiness as it is a central component of the Living, Learning and Working goals, but it would be beneficial to explore the potential of expanding existing vocational programming options.

Perhaps the biggest and most significant shift to better focus on individual student goals and design student-specific programming is the transition from a credit system to a competency-based portfolio to determine program completion and graduation requirements. *The competency-based portfolio is designed to address the needs of adult learners with additional criminogenic needs. This includes differentiated instruction, individualized learning plans, flexible pathways for achieving and demonstrating proficiencies, and a self-paced option.* The Visiting Team heard from many teachers that although challenging to adopt, the competency portfolio system has been a very positive and beneficial change for students and teachers.

It was clear to the visiting team that the competency-based portfolio is an excellent fit for the learning profiles of the students and once again reflect CHSVT's deep understanding of the needs of their school population. This system allows the staff to consider the student's past academic, work, and life experiences (sometimes occurring over the course of many years) to develop a plan to fill in gaps in their learning and truly tailor and differentiate the plan to their unique needs, level of performance and life circumstances. Staff and students report that this approach has significantly improved students' ability to see the work as meaningful, relevant and worth their time and effort. This is a significant measure of progress for a student population that has historically experienced a high degree of failure in school.

Program Structures and Supports

The Administration and Faculty acknowledge that continuing to improve the structures and supports to ensure the continued quality of the program is an important goal. CHSVT has already devoted time and attention to this effort. There have been some recent professional development initiatives particular to content areas that have been impactful and widely implemented. These include instructional coaching in math and literacy from outside consultants as well as in the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) to assist in writing instruction and assessment. These initiatives are commendable and certainly relevant to the academic work of teachers on a daily basis.

However, the Visiting Team heard many staff describe additional professional development needs that could benefit from more attention and development. Some of this results from the many roles that CHSVT teachers need to assume as part of their role. All teachers the Visiting Team spoke with described teaching out of their endorsement and formal training areas. All teachers described taking on responsibilities related to guidance counseling and in some cases mental health support. Teachers also referenced the need to provide positive behavior supports and strategies for emotional regulation in the classroom. This included understanding how to navigate appropriate boundaries with students; nurturing a trusting teaching relationship while simultaneously maintaining safety.

The multi-role model that teachers take on at CHSVT makes sense in the context of the program and the nature of the student population. However, it creates a greater professional development necessity and requirement to meet the demands of the model and provide adequate support to teachers to effectively carry out all their responsibilities. In addition, there are real and substantial challenges due to the number of facilities and their geographic spread. This combination of a wide range of teaching demands and a wide range of logistical considerations make consistency in professional development and instructional support an exceptional challenge for CHSVT.

The Visiting Team suggests that the School continue to reflect on developing a model for professional development to meet their unique needs as a school. This model should emphasize not only content training, but a way to establish a functioning and consistent means of ongoing professional learning that is directly linked to the needs of teachers (both individually and collectively) and the performance of students. As the teachers have

learned to exhibit a high degree of flexibility to meet students learning needs, the professional learning model needs to have equal flexibility to meet the needs of the teachers and further foster collaboration and support. This is especially critical for teachers who are new to CHSVT or new to the profession. Finally, as will be discussed in detail in other sections of this report, the supervision and evaluation process should be used to inform the professional development planning process and ensure that teachers receiving targeted feedback and support.

The Visiting Team recognizes that the School is actively working towards improvement in this area. The teachers described the monthly faculty meetings as very useful, but not sufficient in terms of enough time to meet the range professional development demands required by their roles. Administrators reported that in the past the cooperative teacher learning such the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model have been used and that may warrant future exploration. This seems like an especially good potential fit as many teachers are already described the informal support and collaboration they feel from their colleagues as a significant factor impacting their positive experience at CHSVT.

There is clear excitement and momentum around the direction of the curriculum and instruction based on the portfolio system. *The one curriculum constant has been the continual development of the new competency-based portfolios.* However, *the school does not have a written policy for regularly reviewing the academic program, as it is undergoing an enormous transformation that requires regular review. The current process is to assess, revise, review and repeat.* Although evolving nature of the implementation of the competency-based portfolio model has made curriculum review challenging, it is still a critical element to ensure consistency and sustainability despite inevitable changes in personnel. While it is understandable that during the time of transition *some of the subsequent changes have been difficult to implement, and somewhat akin to "building the plane while flying it."*, this is a challenging way to introduce new curricula and makes it extremely difficult to monitor subsequent fidelity of implementation and quality of instruction.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team concurs with the School's assertion that *CHSVT's strength is that the school truly lives its mission and provides flexible, appropriate individualized programs.* The portfolio is an excellent example of how to develop an innovative program which will drive instruction and assessment to individualize the learning process for students. The delivery of the program - the quality of the daily instruction, the dedication to individualized programming, the deep understanding and respect for students for who they are as learners - is the strength of the program. However, the necessity to develop long-range systematic controls to ensure the delivery, such as plans for professional development and curriculum review, is significant. As a result, the Visiting Team believes a rating of P2 is appropriate. The Visiting Team strongly believes that once the portfolio undergoes these refinements and controls, it can--and should--serve as a model for all schools, public and private, on how to implement a student-centered, competency-based portfolio. We encourage CHSVT to share this portfolio model widely within education inside and outside of Vermont.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. CHSVT is fully committed to developing students intellectually, socially, physically, aesthetically, emotionally and ethically in all aspects of school and student life.
2. Through its commitment to the Habits of Mind, the staff has provided a developmental framework to assist students in their living, learning, and work.

3. The School truly lives its Mission by providing every student an individualized program for living, learning, and working through the competency-based portfolio.

Recommendation 1

Continue to develop avenues for effective communication between CHSVT and DOC so that the three key components of education, confinement and program services are coordinated and integrated to best benefit the students.

Recommendation 2

Create a comprehensive plan and model for professional development that address the unique needs of the teaching staff, allow them to meet the expectations of their multifaceted roles, and is informed by the teacher evaluation plan.

Recommendation 3

Create a comprehensive plan for curriculum review linked to professional development and teacher evaluation.

Recommendation 4

Since a main focus of the school program is to give students increased skills that will assist them in getting and maintaining a job upon release, it is important to develop increased work training opportunities and certificate programs at all centers.

Standard 5: Experience of the Students

Standard

The school actively considers individual students and has developed plans, policies, programs, and pedagogy to nurture, support, and encourage all students to reach their potential and to participate in the life of the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

CHSVT's educational model is, and always has been, focused on adult students as distinct individuals with unique and complex educational and criminogenic needs. Students are criminal offenders within the confines of prisons or supervised by Probation and Parole offices when enrolled at our community campuses.

In general, the students have not been successful in traditional school settings. Many have had substance abuse problems and have struggled with poverty and homelessness. Students repeatedly say that the personal attention they receive and the sincere interest in their goals and accomplishments are the most important school qualities that help them to succeed. An example of this personal attention is provided in an excerpt from a letter written by a former student:

It is most definitely a shame that I had to complete my education in jail, but nonetheless, I am still getting my diploma and a graduation. Something I thought would never happen. Thank you all so much for all you have done. I feel that if it wasn't for you then achieving my goal to graduate would have been near impossible for me if not totally impossible and for that I have to thank all of you, you all made a huge impact on me and my education something I can never repay you for but hey, that's your job (Community High School of Vermont, 2013, p.26).

The program is not a "one size fits all" model and never has been. Students have choice and have different plans and pathways, may work at their own pace, and are treated respectfully as adults who are capable of reaching their goals. One premise is that they can do it and they can either take their time or get on a personal fast-track. Without time pressure, students often overcome their fears or past notions of how school works and learn to enjoy learning and accomplishing goals.

The key to the success of the school may be rooted in the quality of the personal relationships that students develop with teachers. The results of the student survey conducted as part of the NEASC self-study support the notion that relationships with teachers are highly valued. For the statement "There are faculty to whom I can turn for advice both in academic and personal issues", 95 of the 110 who responded either strongly agreed or agreed. The student comments on the surveys are telling as well. In response to "CHSVT's strengths are:", the remarks about the teaching staff or methods are overwhelmingly positive.

Observations

The Visiting Team concurs that *CHSVT recognizes and celebrates the unique differences of individuals within our student body, including: age, disability, cultural norms, ethnicity, family background, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identification, religious beliefs, etc.* The Visiting Team has observed that students in all classroom environments are treated with respect and concern. CHSVT mandates and maintains an open and affirmative response to individual differences. Diversity enriches all aspects of life at CHSVT. One student said, "Out of all the times I've been in, all my teachers have helped me. I'm not the smartest kid in math, I get ticked off sometimes. I get frustrated, and my teacher offered to help me out. I'm glad the teachers are there to help you."

The Educational Support Teams (ESTs) provide some opportunity for teachers to meet together to discuss students as both individuals and groups. Teachers have observed that those weekly meetings provide time to meet to discuss student needs and to problem solve. Special education faculty are in attendance as well as other relevant staff as necessary. In the past, an administrator was often present at those weekly meetings, but that practice has not continued recently. Faculty have explained that typically, most EST meetings are spent on the concerns of individual students, leaving limited time for program planning. The structure and frequency of ESTs varies from location to location. Although some schools continue to try to meet in a PLC setting, this process has not continued with fidelity across campuses. Faculty do meet together to plan courses and quarter courses during the planning week prior to each quarter and as needed.

The Self-Study indicated that *both CHSVT and the Department of Corrections offer training that addresses how one's personal experiences may be reflected in personal actions and attitudes in the workplace.* According to the student survey, over 86% of students agree that "The school engages me in a variety of experiences that reflect the diversity of the student body and the multicultural nature of society." Because the vast majority of school staff is white and the students come from diverse economic, ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds, time should be set aside to continue to discuss and reflect on these differences.

According to the 2016 Procedure Manual, Living, Learning, Working plan goals are created in a MAGIC class. The Procedure Manual, however, does not elaborate on how to develop the plan. Each teacher looks at the available data to assist a student in developing the plan. The Manual does state that "Each student's progress is monitored through performance assessment, teacher constructed testing, diagnostic teaching and student observations." This assessment is done by teachers on an ongoing basis, at the end of each quarter, and when a student transitions to a different location.

CHSVT makes every effort to acquire the necessary records for IEPs and 504 Plans from students' most recent school of attendance. *All ADA requirements are included in the DOC's policy and procedures (See DOC Directive #371.01 - Americans with Disabilities Act Facilities and Field).* CHSVT, as part of DOC, has access to these records as needed. Although it can be challenging for older students, the school makes every effort to obtain records and also accesses mental health and medical records within DOC records. CHSVT also allows students to self-report a disability. This information is collected primarily to assess individual student needs rather than to assess program needs.

Resources are available to the faculty, either in-school or through outside consultants, to identify and meet the

needs of individual students. Through EST meetings, students are referred for additional services or testing.

Students, correctional educators, transition coordinators, mental health providers, special educators, and caseworkers may all contribute to the process of gathering and sharing information that identifies CHSVT students with special needs. The DOC is currently pursuing a contract with a school psychologist to conduct psychological testing when needed. Teachers fulfill the role of adviser and are regularly available to discuss issues or concerns and to make revisions to a student's plan as needed. Some teachers, especially newer teachers, have expressed a desire for more training in this area, because advising is a central component to the correctional educators' roles and responsibilities. More formal training and procedures related to these issues would benefit the students.

Teachers may refer students to caseworkers or other service providers for problems unrelated to education. The role and relationship between teachers and caseworkers is critical and should be strengthened.

There are challenges to college placement in this environment, but it is explored when appropriate. Career placement and post-incarceration education, however, is essential. Students can receive grant aid for non-degree programs through the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC). Voc Rehab also provides assistance for students with disabilities. The Department of Labor provides information and statistics for students as they reenter the workforce. Students have expressed that they value these opportunities. In addition, as part of the work component of the portfolio, students complete several job-related instruments and discuss the results with their teachers. These instruments include the Job Search Attitude Inventory, Barriers to Employment Success Inventory, and the Career Decision-Making System Revised (CDM). Students also have many opportunities to obtain work-related certifications, such as ServSafe, OSHA, CPR/First Aid, among several others. Students state emphatically that the focus on workforce readiness through CHSVT is essential. One student stated, "I have left jail before, but I have never felt more ready to get a good job when I leave than I do this time."

Students who have been enrolled in school either in a facility or a community center are able to continue schooling after their confinement, probation or parole period is complete.

Staff are responsive to student input on an individual basis and take student input into account when designing courses and curriculum, but the process is not systematic.

The school and the DOC both have policies regarding behavior that promotes responsibility, inclusiveness, and equity in all respects. There is a zero tolerance policy for any discriminatory actions of any sort. CHSVT classrooms are a study in serving a diverse adult population in a rural northern state. As one student said, "Certain classes teachers teach in a practical way. Breaking it down. Each teacher relates it to who's in there, an equal playing field for everybody. Helping out the people who need more help. It's not just here's your problem now do it."

Due to restrictions related to correctional policies, CHSVT does not offer or promote online classes. Some teachers do provide assistance with students to complete community college courses or correspondence courses, but this is difficult because of the lack of internet access.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the Self Study on a rating of P1. Despite many challenges, CHSVT provides a safe, supportive, inclusive, and personalized learning environment for students. While teachers have expressed legitimate concerns about the impacts of budget cuts on the experience of the students (losing adjunct faculty is one example) they have been able to maintain their supportive and impactful role in the lives of their students.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. Teaching staff excel at building and supporting relationships, motivating students and providing both guidance and education to their students. This is the cornerstone of the success of the program.
2. CHSVT provides an exceptionally inclusive learning environment that is responsive to the needs of individuals. Despite the many challenges teachers face beyond their control, they go out of their way to develop creative classes and learning opportunities for the students in front of them. Students are keenly aware of the dedication and concern of their teachers and are extremely appreciative of the educational program they receive.
3. CHSVT, especially through the Living, Learning, Working Plan and the Portfolio, provides students opportunities to take ownership of their learning.

Recommendation 1

CHSVT should develop a systematic way to collect student feedback in order to inform their overall program. Developing a system-wide end-of-course evaluation would be one possible avenue to accomplish this task.

Recommendation 2

CHSVT should review and refine the protocols, participants and procedures for Educational Support Teams.

Recommendation 3

CHSVT should offer systematic professional development/support for the advising and counseling elements of the job.

Recommendation 4

While recognizing the unique challenges of their setting, CHSVT should increase opportunities for students to access online learning.

Standard 6: Resources to Support the Program

Standard

Given the school's mission, there are adequate resources (space, equipment, technology, materials, and community) to support the school's program.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

Community High School of Vermont's budget is a line item within the Vermont Department of Corrections' budget. The amount is determined by the state executive and legislative branches each year. The Department of Corrections' administrators ultimately oversee expenditures and their business office monitors all transactions. Teachers submit electronic requests to purchase materials, supplies and equipment which then must be approved by the Head of School prior to purchase.

Although each campus within CHSVT is in a unique setting with its respective correctional facility or probation and parole office, the school ensures adequate and equal access to educational resources. Each campus is outfitted with classroom space, technology via Smart Boards (in all but two campuses) and instructional computer labs in every campus. Educational materials are kept throughout the campuses and reallocated as needed. Each campus is involved in its unique community, even when the community is a correctional facility. For example, students participate in community activities including community gardens, public art projects, facility employment and recreational opportunities.

Overall, the December 2014 NEASC self-study preparation survey respondents indicated there are adequate funds for essential equipment needed for required academic, career, and technical education activities. The surveys indicate that 78% of students, 71% of teachers, and 57% of Corrections Staff agree or strongly agree that the school has sufficient resources to meet the needs of students.

Observations

CHSVT operates in building space which is owned or leased by the State of Vermont. This property comes under the authority of the State of Vermont Building and General Services Department (BGS). This department is solely responsible for assuring that facilities meet all applicable state and federal guidelines as applied to public buildings.

A CHSVT campus is defined as the individual rooms used by education and maintained by BGS. Campuses are located within seven correctional facilities throughout the state and at eight Probation and Parole offices. Space

is shared at some locations and there are often common areas for recreation, programming, meeting and visiting.

Students at the community campuses have access to self-directed recreational and leisure-time activities as well as some school-initiated recreational activities. In the correctional facilities, there is space available for recreational and leisure time activities that may be utilized by the school as well as by correctional staff and volunteers. Time and access are regulated by DOC security policies and staffing constraints.

The educational settings and spaces were well-lighted with adequate windows and common or group areas were spacious and accommodating for instructional group work.

The educational posters, other instructional visuals, furniture and reading and curricular materials seemed to be age appropriate for the adult students who are enrolled in the school.

Needs vary from campus to campus and some campuses could benefit by having increased resources. Resource distribution is limited in some respects by space limitations within correctional facilities. In general, what we have is adequate, but we could benefit by expansion in some locations.

Faculty members who were interviewed by the Visiting Team indicated that their purchase requests for supplies and materials were frequently approved. Some teachers even indicated that they learned which items would be approved and would not submit for resource items that had a low probability of approval.

The school has an acceptable use policy that all students are required to read and sign prior to getting a student user account. The policy includes information on the appropriate and ethical use of technology. The policy is in the student handbook which is given to all students upon admission. This policy is found on p.22 of the FY16 Policy Manual, and p.29 of our FY16 Procedure Manual.

Multiple faculty members reported to the Visiting Team that they share their resources and instructional materials among the campus sites based on the current student needs for those sites. More specifically, faculty members are expected to email all other faculty to inquire about availability of needed resources. The physical exchange of resources can also occur during the monthly faculty meetings. *Teachers within the facilities provide students with materials that support their educational needs and are able to retrieve and download information from the Internet onto the servers in the student computer labs.*

Through professional networking and other creative means, faculty members have developed positive relationships with local colleges and the Vermont Humanities Council who have donated and shared curricular content materials with CHSVT.

A number of faculty members who were interviewed by the Visiting Team reported that the budgetary reduction of adjunct faculty negatively impacted the school programming. This resulted in the loss of work camp credentialing opportunities and co-curricular classes, like art and design classes.

One faculty member, who teaches students who live in the local community, stated that a science lab, physical education resources, and arts facilities would increase his effectiveness as a teacher and improve student experience.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. It appears that there is no formalized timeline and plan for the implementation of Internet availability for student use at all CHSVT sites, although many faculty and administrators have expressed optimism of the imminence of its availability.

In the area of current technology, which includes hardware and software, a formalized plan needs to be

developed and implemented after a thorough technology needs assessment.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

- 1. The school has added an Educational Technology Specialist position.*
- 2. The school is beginning to integrate the Internet at community campuses. The Commissioner of Corrections has stated publicly that the Department is committed to working to develop secure access to the technology at the facility sites.*
3. Many faculty and students believe they have adequate resources to meet the educational, vocational, and technical needs of the students.

Recommendation 1

The Community High School of Vermont should develop a multi-year technology plan with dates for deliverables. The plan should include when the Internet will be installed in classrooms as well as the replacement and updating of hardware.

Standard 9: Faculty

Standard

There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty to carry out the mission of the school and the school follows a comprehensive and defined program of professional development that supports continued enhancement of teachers' skills.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

The standard review committee has found that the school has an adequate number of appropriately qualified teachers and follows a rigorous program of professional development that supports continued enhancement of their skills.

The recruitment, application, interview, and screening process is designed to ensure that highly qualified teachers are selected to teach within the unique setting of CHSVT. The competitive salary and benefits package offered by the State of Vermont attracts highly qualified candidates.

All new CHSVT teaching staff are required to obtain a Vermont Educator's license. While many CHSVT faculty teach outside of their endorsement areas, ongoing professional development geared towards standardizing instruction, along with a high degree of collaboration between faculty members, ensure that students receive high-quality instruction across content areas.

The contract negotiated by the Vermont State Employees' Association and the State of Vermont ensures ethical treatment among all faculty, administration, and staff with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions. In general, faculty members feel respected by administration, fellow faculty, and students.

Faculty are appropriately qualified and trained to deliver education through 21st Century learning methods, despite facing ongoing obstacles to providing students with regular Internet access, as many campuses have been limited by the Departments of Corrections and Information & Innovation in this regard.

Observations

The Vermont Department of Human Resources (VTDR) advertises CHSVT vacancies to all state employees, as required by negotiated agreement with the Vermont State Employees' Association, (VSEA or the union) and the state. Positions are listed on the state's public human resources web page.

Applications must be submitted via the State of Vermont's online application system. Subsequently, a register of qualified applicants is sent to the CHSVT administration. Individuals are invited to interviews. Depending on the opening, the administration asks several teachers, usually from the campus team where the vacancy occurs, and administrative staff to serve on an interview panel.

Both newer and more seasoned faculty members at different campus sites stated to the Visiting Team members the need for a consistent and comprehensive new teacher orientation program with a formalized mentorship model that pairs experienced teachers with newly hired ones. Additionally, there exists a strong need for new faculty to have a tour of all VT DOC facilities across the state that house CHSVT. Many faculty members reported that after a few years of employment, they still have not visited all of the CHSVT campus sites. One teacher described this area for improvement when she stated, "We wish we could do more orientation for new teachers. We do spend time going over the manual with them but the rest of it we place on our experienced teachers. We do have a list of what should be covered, but we do not have the time to always implement it."

CHSVT contracted consultants to train all of us in the delivery of SIM (Strategic Instruction Model) literacy strategies, as well as math focused around the updated Common Core standards. Further, each faculty member is required to seek out individualized professional development opportunities (workshops, conferences, or advanced coursework) to maintain their Vermont Educator's license. We have access to state funding to take up to six credits of college-level courses or a stipend to cover over time work for up to 40 hours of professional development time (called "corrections competency training") each year.

However, it was not evident that there are recurring monthly or yearly professional development opportunities that are scheduled in advance to foreshadow need for best educational practices related to the ever changing student population. Many faculty reported that they submit individual purchase requests for external professional development opportunities that may or may not be approved. These professional development requests are typically in the area of their license endorsement. There was minimal evidence that there is a professional development plan over a 12-month period that proactively addresses best teaching practice, or other topics related to their student population.

It was also noted by the Visiting Team that teachers are expected to teach outside of their license endorsement content area with some informal support by those more experienced content area teachers. There was no evidence that there was a formalized process for these teachers providing instruction in non-endorsed areas to receive the professional development support and on-the-ground mentoring and coaching from their qualified colleagues. One administrator described this expectation when he conducts the initial interview with a faculty-candidate, "The first thing I tell teachers when I interview them is you're no longer a math or a science teacher. Now you have to teach everything."

Based on faculty and student interviews conducted by the Visiting Team, the teachers work to model culturally appropriate values in our daily interactions, and they all care about our students as individuals notwithstanding their criminal backgrounds and remain focused on their education.

In the past year, the CHSVT Coordinating Committee (C3) was established and is comprised of faculty members from the various CHSVT sites to help with information sharing, problem-solving, and allowing faculty to share concerns with the administrators. Although the effectiveness and viability of this committee is still to be determined, it appears that its formation and focus are indicative of the administration's concern about maintaining more direct communication with each campus site.

Overall, CHSVT's faculty exemplify a warm, caring, and engaging approach and rapport with their students. Even with the multiple campus sites that are separated geographically, the Visiting Team, during their various

CHSVT site visits, observed classroom interactions and heard from students that the faculty members are consistently friendly, accessible, and helpful. The students expressed their appreciation for their teachers and highlighted the value of their instructional approach in the following quotes:

“Our teachers are saints.”

“There is nothing they would not do for us.”

“If it's not offered the teacher will find a way to offer it.”

“They will bring things from home to meet educational needs.”

“Teachers go the extra mile.”

Many students reported that the faculty members have positively impacted their lives and motivated them to work towards completing their educational goals and workforce credentials on their way to becoming lifelong learners.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. In terms of new faculty orientation and training, it would be beneficial for CHSVT to establish a formalized and comprehensive orientation model that includes a mentorship program and a complete tour of all CHSVT sites across Vermont.

In the area of professional development, a more formalized plan and timeline over a 12-month period should be implemented.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. The CHSVT faculty are committed to, invested in, and highly experienced with this unique student population.
2. *All CHSVT educators are required to have and maintain a Vermont State Board of Professional Educators' license.*
3. The CHSVT provide a high level of social support to one another via email and phone calls and especially during the monthly, daylong faculty meetings.

Recommendation 1

Develop and implement a formal support system for acclimating new staff members that includes a consistent and comprehensive faculty orientation program and formal mentorship model for new faculty members.

Recommendation 2

Develop a yearlong professional development plan, with the ultimate goal being a multi-year plan, for faculty to address the need for ongoing training in best teaching practice, instructional strategies in specific content areas

and criminogenic topics specific to the student population.

Standard 10: Administration

Standard

The administration provides leadership and maintains a structure to facilitate the effective functioning of the school, including the participation of faculty in decision-making.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

In February 2016, the Director/Superintendent resigned her position. The current CHSVT administrative team consists of an Interim Head of School and Assistant Director. The support staff includes an Educational Technology Specialist, an Administrative Services Coordinator and a Data Analyst & Information Coordinator. The business management and accounting functions are done by the Department of Corrections finance office. The administrative team has assumed the responsibility for all the operations of the school including personnel, policies, curriculum, and budgetary decisions. Most of the operating decisions, including curriculum, budget, and policy making is centralized and determined by the administrative team.

The school no longer has a committee structure. In 2010, the school's principal began a review of the school's policies and management structure. The function of each committee was assessed each and with the exception of two committees, Technology and the Local Standards Board, it was found that they were highly ineffective. They struggled to achieve goals and outcomes and were disbanded as a result. The technology committee was phased out after creating a policy and procedure for acquiring and maintaining digital technology and the hiring of an Educational Technology Specialist. The Local Standards Board remains intact and oversees the teaching licensure of CHSVT faculty.

Several attempts to create a system of shared leadership have been unsuccessful over the years. With the resignation of the Director/Superintendent in February 2016, the Interim Head of School and Assistant Director brought a proposal to the faculty to create a Coordinating Committee, called C3. This group will work collaboratively with CHSVT administration and DOC administration to define a sustainable shared-leadership model that reflects the diversity of the school.

A new student information system, called Focus, was activated to document student information and progress in 2013. With that came the appointment of a faculty member/Correctional Educator as Registrar who oversaw the day to day operation and record keeping of student information: transcripts, attendance, enrollment, and teaching schedules until July 2016. As of August 2016, the majority of these duties are currently being restructured and reassigned to the Administrative Services Coordinator and the Data Analyst & Information Coordinator.

In addition to the student record-keeping, the administration introduced an online system called My Learning Plan (MLP), recently acquired by Frontline Education, to record and track expenditures, leave time, and professional development requests. Each faculty and staff member and campus must request approval for any of the proceeding and it must be approved by the administrative team.

Observations

Through observations, interviews, surveys and review of documentation, the Visiting Team concluded that, in spite of the recent resignation of the Head of School, the interim Head of School effectively stepped into the leadership vacuum and established, in a brief period of time, an effective leadership style that has improved morale and provided direction for the School. In addition to gaining the confidence of the Faculty, the Visiting Team noted that the interim Head of School implemented a new committee structure designed to engage the faculty in decision-making in a more meaningful and effective manner. Perhaps most encouraging is the interim Head of School's willingness to collaborate effectively with the Faculty and to recognize the strengths and limitations of the CHSVT in the context of the recent reorganization within the Department of Corrections.

The Visiting Team also observed that the implementation of new student information system, Focus, as well as the new professional development system, MLP. Both are designed with multiple goals in mind: 1) to keep the CHSVT up to date with enhanced digital capacity; 2) to provide potentially greater access to information for all members of the CHSVT administrative team and the Faculty; and 3) to provide a digital infrastructure designed to help the CHSVT function more effectively. Moreover, the central office administrative team displayed a strong commitment to the CHSVT as well as a strong knowledge base in terms of the fundamental administrative functions (finance, technology, etc.) necessary for the CHSVT to support its Faculty and students and implement its mission.

The Visiting Team observed that over the past year the CHSVT experienced a transition in leadership in the Head of School position. As the prior leader of the CHSVT left the position, the current interim Head of School assumed this position approximately six months ago. Within that short amount of time, the Visiting Team noted the tremendous gains in leadership as exhibited by positive, if not glowing, comments from Faculty as well as positive support from the DOC Senior Management Team. Of note, the creation of the new C3 meeting of school representatives is viewed as a significant step in enhancing the interpersonal communication within the CHSVT. In addition and as noted by the CHSVT itself, the CHSVT does consistently review and update its policy manual.

As the central office leadership team (Head of School and Assistant Head of School who is on medical leave) stabilizes, the Visiting Team recommends that increased focus occur in the areas of community relations and government relations. The CHSVT performs meaningful and effective work for its students; it is imperative that the CHSVT's leadership convey this information consistently to the community and to other government entities (agencies, Legislature, Governor's Office).

Throughout its visit, the Visiting Team spent a significant amount of time with the interim Head of School in group as well as one-on-one settings. In addition to his credentials listed above, it is evident that the Head of School possesses a wealth of practical experience and knowledge of the CHSVT. Even over such brief amount of time since his appointment as interim Head, his experience in listening, responding, and crafting proposed solutions to issues presented by the CHSVT (communication with all constituencies, resources, technology, etc.) impressed the Visiting Team.

As noted above in the CHSVT's self study, the CHSVT has exhibited a strong desire to consistently refine and modify its curriculum in order to meet the evolving needs of the students and the CHSVT. One area of concern relates to the implementation of the new curriculum and how students will be measured or assessed for credit and proficiency. Though the Visiting Team believes that the administration and Faculty will address this issue over time and that they have, in fact, begun work on this issue, the Team recommends that a more formal plan

for determining proficiency be adopted as soon as practicable.

In meeting with faculty and the central office administrative team, the Visiting Team heard consistently that the prior committee based process did not work as envisioned. Conversely, the Team heard much more positive responses from Faculty and central administrative staff that the new streamlined C3 model may work much more effectively. The willingness of the CHSVT to adopt and try new mechanisms to involve the geographically scattered Faculty in decision making is commendable. The Visiting Team recommends that the administration continue to monitor the new system and concurrently seek additional methods to engage the Faculty on an ongoing basis.

The Visiting Team noted the commitment of the Head of School to further his education through multiple degrees and certificates. The CHSVT should continue to encourage and provide opportunities for, professional growth especially given the very unique nature of the CHSVT within the correction's environment. Vermont is cutting edge in this regard, and continued commitment to enhancing this model through administrative professional development is strongly encouraged.

Because the State evaluation system does not focus explicitly on teaching or administrative performance, the Visiting Team noted that actual evaluation of the administrative team has not occurred. Consequently, development of a mechanism to evaluate educational administrative performance should be a priority for the CHSVT since so much of the CHSVT's key issues identified in its Self Study (morale, communication, long term planning, resource allocation, instructional training and feedback, teacher evaluation, etc...) are tied to administrative performance.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the CHSVT Self Study in terms of the overall progress in stabilizing the administrative leadership of the CHSVT and finds that the current administration does provides leadership and maintains a structure to facilitate the effective functioning of the school. However, certain key issues should also be addressed as the CHSVT moves forward.

The interim Head of School has, within a short period of time, provided stability and effective leadership that has allowed the CHSVT to refocus on its vital mission. Of note, new mechanisms have been introduced in an effort to increase meaningful faculty participation in decision making, and the initial response to these new mechanisms has been favorable. Moreover, the administration has worked with the Faculty to refine and improve the CHSVT curriculum as well as the CHSVT digital infrastructure (Focus for students; MLP for teachers).

In the area of communication, further enhancement of community and government relations should continue in order to help the CHSVT advance the understanding of its mission to external parties. In addition, a mechanism to evaluate the administrative team performance should be developed and implemented. Finally, resolution of the interim status of the Head of School position remains a key piece that must be resolved within a reasonable period of time.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. The current interim administrative team possesses the requisite professional and educational experience necessary to lead the CHSVT.
2. In a very brief period of time, the Interim Head of School has adopted new policies and committee structures designed to increase communication and shared decision making with the Faculty.

3. The CHSVT is committed to consistently refining and revising its curriculum to meet the needs of its students.
4. Since the completion of the Self Study, the Visiting Team notes that Faculty expressed, and the Visiting Team observed, repeatedly that morale is significantly better. Credit must be given to the Interim Head of School for this transformation in morale.

Recommendation 1

Although morale has improved significantly since completion of the Self Study, the administrative team and the CHSVT Governing Structure should continue to monitor morale and address any concerns that emerge from the Faculty.

Recommendation 2

In order to stabilize the administrative structure, it would be important to resolve the interim status of the Head of School within a reasonable period of time.

Recommendation 3

Given the history of unsuccessful committee structures in the past, the administrative team should continue to monitor the evolution and effectiveness of the promising C3 initiative.

Recommendation 4

The need for ongoing communication on all levels (leadership to faculty, program to program, teacher to teacher, DOC to the CHSVT, CHSVT to DOC etc.) remains vital and should be consistently emphasized and enhanced in order to help the CHSVT function effectively.

Recommendation 5

The CHSVT and its Governing Structure should develop and implement a system of evaluation of its administrative team.

Administration needs to develop a plan to communicate the CHSVT successes and contributions to the lives of the Students and implement this plan on an ongoing basis in order to increase understanding of its value to all other division in the DOC.

Standard 11: Evaluation and Assessment

Standard

The school engages in forms of programmatic assessment consistent with fulfilling its mission and core values. This data is used to inform decision-making and planning.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

Overall, the school has done some very focused work on this standard over the last several years to include comprehensive assessments and is now looking at the trends from data seen in all assessments in a more strategic way. The administrative team reviews assessment data for reading, math and writing. Students create portfolios to collect artifacts that address proficiencies over time. In terms of assessing CHSVT as a whole, a random sample of completed portfolios could be used for quality assurance.

For many reasons, formal exit interviews of both students and faculty have not been done with regularity. This is not saying it would not be valuable in program planning. For students, the portfolio review process allows for reflection on the academic process and whole school experience. Administrators have rarely done exit interviews of faculty due to limited time and distance.

At this time, the school does not have formal procedures to follow up with alumni, but does keep in touch with many students who have graduated and maintain contact with the school. Most recently, a Memorandum of Understanding has been created with the Department of Labor to collect data on post release earnings for students.

Historically, CHSVT students have not participated in statewide assessments. In 2015, for the first time, qualifying students took the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment test that the State of Vermont Agency of Education has asked from public schools. The CHSVT portfolio provides students with a personalized and flexible pathway for learning and uses Proficiency-Based Learning as set forth in Vermont Act 77 and the State Board of Education's Education Quality Standards.

In 2013, the school embarked on a major initiative for professional development in the areas of reading, writing and math. It was directly tied to student assessment outcomes. Winona Lowe was hired as a literacy consultant to improve Language Arts instruction methods throughout the school. Winona provided direct input to the administration to align assessments with measuring student proficiency in reading and writing. In addition, Elaine Watson has been hired as a math consultant to provide professional development in 21st century math instruction and help evaluate current math programming.

CHSVT has a supervision model based on Charlotte Danielson's work. Travel distance makes this model challenging and as a result, many faculty members have not had formal supervisory feedback. In 2010, the newly hired principal sent surveys out every month or two to gather information from faculty regarding their experiences and expectations. In the spring of 2011, an evaluation survey was sent to all staff regarding the administrative team.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has a procedure that outlines required core competency trainings for all staff, including teachers, that includes diversity training every two years. Over the years, diversity training has been provided to teachers primarily at faculty meetings, but also provided by the DOC at the facilities.

In summary, CHSVT has made significant progress in addressing this standard since our first report to NEASC and is now administering a number of different programmatic assessments. These are consistent with the new education mission statement. Although this information is used to make informed decisions, there are still some areas that need improvement. The school is committed to continue working on those areas that warrant attention.

Observations

Evaluation and Assessment of Students

The Visiting Team agrees that CHSVT has made progress in the areas of evaluation and assessment since the last NEASC accreditation. In particular, the School recognizes and endeavors to respond to the unique challenges of addressing their student population. Some of these challenges include the diversity of prior academic experiences and achievement (at times many years ago), the transient nature of many students, and the need for individualized student programming. The School should be commended for its commitment to finding the best methods to assess and document student performance and progress based on these needs.

The school uses the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) for reading and math and SIM (Strategic Instruction Model) for writing. Although relatively new to the School, these tools were widely referenced by staff and appear useful in helping to determine placement in appropriate academic activities as well as academic progress. CASAS assessments are conducted at intake and are expected to be re-administered after approximately ninety days of instruction to measure individual student progress and effectiveness of instruction.

The competency-based portfolio is the primary tool for collecting and documenting student performance and progress. Teachers and staff consistently reported they feel this is one of the most effective methods they have used to drive and monitor student programming. The portfolio appears to be an excellent fit for the student population because it can be individualized for each student and paced accordingly. The proficiency indicators are based on the Common Core Standards and correspond to main academic content areas. Further, the portfolio is divided into three "folios", Living, Learning, and Working, which are designed to support the readiness of students in each of these key elements of re-entry into the community. The portfolio assessment tool is a thoughtful reflection of CHSVT's understanding of the goals of assessing its students to most effectively inform the programming that is relevant to their needs.

One area of the portfolio as an assessment tool that could benefit from further attention and reflection are ways to improve consistency on how proficiency indicators are measured. The Visiting Team heard from staff that currently, the measurement/evaluation of specific indicators and artifacts as proficient is highly dependent on the interpretation of the individual teacher. Further, it is not clear what measure is used to dictate proficiency. For example, a 2012 edition of the Curriculum Framework referenced performance at the 8th grade level as proficiency. However, in discussions and interviews staff indicated that this is not consistently used in practice. Additionally, there are no guidelines for how to measure proficiency for students with disabilities or who are

significantly below grade level. Presently, the determination of proficiency seems to rely highly on individual teacher interpretation. While the judgement of teachers is a critical part of the process, procedures to improve consistency in how this is applied would be of benefit to the students and the program. It is important to note that the Administration has indicated that they recognize this is an area of concern and have begun to address the definition of Proficiency as it relates to portfolios at recent faculty meetings.

Although there are inherent challenges in this setting to keep in contact with “alumni,” developing better methods of capturing data of graduates and former students is essential. First, gathering feedback on successes and challenges of students after the graduate from CHSVT and reenter the workforce can improve the program for current students. Second, information gathered about graduates and can be used to communicate the many metrics of success experienced by CHSVT students in comparison to other released inmates. This information has the potential to build support for current CHSVT programming among a wide array of stakeholders if effectively communicated. The probation and parole offices could take on a greater role in alumni follow-up and the FOCUS information system's ability to track data on “inactive students” could be a potential way to gather data on students who have been released.

Evaluation and Assessment of Faculty, Staff and Administration

CHSVT has brought in outside consultants to help develop programs related to math, writing, and Habits of Mind. These consultants have often worked with individual campuses to help them with development and implementation. Due to a variety of circumstances, the follow-through to help with evaluating the implementation of these programs has been inconsistent.

The school did participate in SBAC testing in 2015 at the request of the state, but not in 2016. The Portfolio is *aligned with Proficiency-Based Learning as set forth in the Vermont State Board of Education's Education Quality Standards.*

Although the supervision manual was recently revised, it has not been implemented. The change in administrative personnel has limited the opportunities for administrative evaluation of teachers. Many teachers have not been observed by an administrator in years; some have never experienced an evaluation. The current plan is not feasible to implement with current personnel. As one teacher stated, “Although the lack of evaluation can be viewed by some as a compliment, it really is a missing piece. Sometimes it feels like we're out on a limb. We deserve concrete feedback from an evaluator.” In addition, evaluation of staff plays a critical role in identifying areas for professional development to improve instructional practices and in turn informs programming decisions. The logistical considerations of the number of CHSVT locations and the wide geographic range pose legitimate challenges. However, given that these factors are immutable, the Administration will need to be creative to identify ways to mitigate these challenges. Significant changes in responsibilities and personnel highlight the importances of systematic collection of feedback to evaluate performance of the administration as a group and as individuals.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. In terms of assessment of students, tools have been identified and are in use to improve the ability to assess and monitor student progress. In particular, the development and use of the competency-based portfolio is a thoughtful tool that meets the unique needs of the student population. CHSVT would benefit from some additional reflection on the consistent measurement of proficiency standards.

In the area of Faculty and Staff assessment, plans and procedures need to be formalized and more uniformly implemented.

Commendations

The Visit Team commends the following:

CHSVT's comprehensive and competencies-based portfolio assessment has personalized the learning experience for all students. They are pioneers within the region for this type of assessment, and it continues to impact the School's comprehensive program and aligns strongly with the Mission.

Recommendation 1

Continue to offer professional development on standardizing the process of determining proficiency within the portfolio.

Recommendation 2

Revise the staff supervision and evaluation model so that it ensures regular and consistent evaluations and observations of all staff.

Recommendation 3

Conduct exit interviews with all students at the time of their portfolio review in order to capture their experiences and recommendations.

Recommendation 4

Develop a plan to track graduates and released students, gather a variety of data, communicate the data to stakeholders to improve the support of programs, and use that data to improve programming for current students.

Recommendation 5

Program and student outcomes need to be clearly defined and assessed to demonstrate individual and overall growth.

Establish a yearly process for soliciting staff feedback on administrative performance in order to set improvement goals.

Standard 12: Health and Safety

Standard

The school is a safe and healthy place for students and faculty.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

The Community High School of Vermont is committed to providing a healthy and safe place for students, staff, and faculty. CHSVT promotes safe learning environments by creating and maintaining an inclusive and respectful school climate within correctional facilities and probation & parole offices. The Department of Corrections (DOC) policies and directives (400 series) for health and safety procedures serve as protocol for the entire corrections staff, including CHSVT faculty at all of our campuses. Teachers work with their local facility or probation & parole security and operations staff to ensure compliance with local emergency response procedures.

The school's faculty and student body treat one another with mutual respect. In addition, the school promotes the acceptance of diversity. It is a safe place where racial, cultural, ethnic, and groups of diverse identities can interact pro-socially in a learning environment. Staff and faculty are hired, in part, on their ability, willingness, and belief in treating all students with respect and dignity, and for their ability to promote a respectful school climate.

CHSVT staff and faculty ensure that learning environment design and staffing are such that inappropriate student behavior can be observed and quickly addressed and reported. Corrections security staffs are in close proximity to aid in case of need. In facilities, the use of two way radios, telephones and "man down" buttons assure quick response for students or staff in need of help, should a potentially unsafe situation arise.

Teaching students who are supervised by the Department of Corrections is often assumed to be a dangerous environment for both faculty and students. This school has a long history of practices that have made CHSVT a safe and healthy place where students learn in a respectful and safe environment. This not only addresses the health and safety concerns for the school, but also models a safe and positive place for lifelong learning for our students.

The students are offered industry-recognized OSHA General Industry safety training and CPR, First Aid, AED by certified CHSVT faculty. This training is supported by annual Vermont Work Safe inspections to ensure that all career and technical education (CTE) areas meet the standards for a safe workplace. This safety education and modeling of safe practices, along with attentive faculty members, has proven to be very effective in keeping students and faculty working safe and aware of the hazards that are present in CTE courses throughout our school.

CHSVT faculty and staff are mandated reporters and receive annual training to ensure policies and procedures for reporting of information are followed. Our staff follows required procedures and attends required trainings in blood borne pathogens, fire evacuation, hostage situations, physical altercations, use of force, "man-down" situations, PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act), and suicide/mental health issues.

Observations

During our visits to a variety of facilities, the Visiting Team observed the CHSVT commitment to providing a safe learning environment for its students. Through interviews with faculty, staff and students, it was apparent that the CHSVT prioritizes the physical and emotional well-being of its students from the hiring process down to individual teacher/student interactions.

Physical health care is provided for students at correctional facilities through Department of Corrections health care staff located at each correctional facility and by physicians who are on call "24/7." Routine dental and eye care are available upon request. At CHSVT community campuses, emergency health personnel can be contacted via phones which are proximate to every classroom. Health care is not provided to students who are living in the local community.

With the exception of Community Sites (where food is not served), facilities and staff for food services are adequate and the quality of the food meets reasonable nutritional requirements.

All students have case managers and some have mental health workers who can be contacted during the day. As students often confide in faculty, teachers act as a resource for them. As a result, referrals for mental health care may sometimes come from faculty. Some faculty indicated that having mental health care services contracted out is challenging because providers are not always invested in the students. Additionally, there appears to be insufficient mental health services available at some facilities. Lack of consistent student mental health support is indicated by faculty as a barrier to success in the classroom for some students. As one teacher said, "It is the missing piece."

Because CHSVT is located within the Department of Corrections (DOC), all safety protocols are indicated by the Department of Corrections policies and directives. This includes a crisis response plan and written school safety and security plan with local response plans in place at each facility. Each facility is required to have a fire evacuation plan posted, and the Visiting Team saw evacuation plans prominently posted throughout the educational facilities. All emergency drills (including fire drills) at correctional facilities and parole and probation offices are planned, executed and documented through the DOC. Based on conversations with faculty and staff, the regularity of these drills varies substantially by facility.

Annual trainings for faculty and staff are required in fire safety and evacuation procedures, blood borne pathogens, first-aid & CPR, suicide prevention, emergency preparedness, and sexual harassment. Faculty were able to readily reference the certifications and expectations in their interviews with the Team. At some locations, a DOC Service Training Coordinator has included CHSVT faculty and staff to schedule required training. Faculty indicated that the addition of this support from DOC has been beneficial.

Several people interviewed indicated that some faculty struggle with boundary issues regarding student discipline. There is still a need for faculty to report antecedent student behavioral incidents to mitigate the occurrence of more heightened, intensive behavioral incidents inside or between classes.

Department of Corrections (DOC) security and operations staff, along with State of Vermont Building and General Services (BGS) staff conduct annual safety audits per state and department policies. Safety deficiencies are identified and corrected within an allotted amount of time in order to make the facilities as safe as possible.

While policies, procedures and manuals are in place, training and the dissemination of safety and security information could be more comprehensive and consistent.

Policies and procedures may vary according to facility; however, having some regulations standardized and shared in the CHSVT manual used by all facilities would lead to a clearer understanding of the overall role of safety in the school.

The Visiting Team observed that classrooms and learning spaces were clean, well-organized settings that nurtured learning. The mutual understanding and respect between students and faculty were readily evident. The addition of cameras to the classroom has increased security for students and faculty alike. In fact, two teachers stated that they always feel safe with their students and if there were a problem, the response time is quick. One teacher expressed that she feels safer at CHSVT than she does at the local community college.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. Although CHSVT has assessed themselves a P2 rating, the Visiting Team concludes that a rating of P1 is appropriate, based on the policies and procedures in place.

In the area of Health and Safety, plans, procedures and training need to be standardized and more uniformly implemented and practiced.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends CHSVT for the following:

1. Creating a safe and nurturing learning environment for its students.
2. *There have been no major incidents of violence between students or toward faculty at CHSVT campuses since our last accreditation.*
3. *CHSVT and DOC policies, personnel, and practices are in place to provide for safety and health of CHSVT's students and staff.*

Recommendation 1

Develop comprehensive training for teachers and staff, including the establishment of boundaries with students specifically regarding safety issues.

Recommendation 2

Clarify procedures for emergencies with DOC Safety Officer and Assistant Chief of Security for Facilities and that these be included in the CHSVT procedure manual.

Standard 13: Communication

Standard

The school maintains effective systems of external and internal communication and record keeping that inform all constituents and facilitate participation where appropriate.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

As described under Standard 2, Community High School of Vermont, while an independent school, is also a part of the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC), which is in turn part of the Vermont Agency of Human Services. This configuration requires additional levels of bureaucracy, and therefore additional layers of internal and external communication.

The external communication measures that the school employs for the general public, legislature and interested constituents include the CHSVT annual report, legislative reports, meeting minutes, and various other mediums. The CHSVT annual report meets the requirement of reporting student progress to the public describes the educational programs and services, features successful student stories and work, and descriptions of the individual campuses. The annual report also holds the logic that articulates school outcomes that are quantifiable.

There is an additional layer of communication that must occur outside of the structure of the school and that is with the executive members of the DOC. This communication structure has changed over the last few years, however, it has stabilized and there is one executive that the Headmaster of CHSVT communicates with to convey and receive information from the DOC Commissioner. This communication is done in a myriad of ways including meetings, emails, phone, etc.

All guiding documents for CHSVT: policies, procedures, staff manuals, student handbook, are available to teachers through a shared drive and a portfolio of manuals sent out at the beginning of each fiscal year. Manuals and/or information for appropriate for public use is and can be published on the school website.

Internal communications for CHSVT is multifaceted as well. Communication between and among staff is accomplished through emails, phone calls and meetings. These communications are dependent upon the situation, timing and urgency of the situation. The entire CHSVT meets on a monthly basis for a faculty meeting where information regarding the DOC, CHSVT, and the legislature and student issues are disseminated and discussed. Issues are raised and processed in person whenever possible.

CHSVT is striving to standardize its communication system so that each campus receives accurate and timely information and procedures and as much as possible, and are uniform across all campuses. Faculty are able to electronically transfer student work or use regular mail to ship hard copies when individuals move from one campus to another so that the student may continue in as seamless a manner as possible.

Observations

In formal and informal conversations with staff, the Visiting Team members heard how the unique nature of multiple campuses in the CHSVT system, supervised as they are by a multi-tiered governance structure and the oversight responsibilities of different agencies and legislative committees in the state, all made communication within each level of that hierarchy challenging at best. It is also obvious to the Visiting Team that while the CHSVT meets all of the formal requirements of publication of all reports and minutes as mandated by the governance guidelines, much of the narrative of the successes and challenges of the program go uncommunicated to the general public or passed along to the legislative oversight committees without all relevant supportive data. The net effect of this, it seems to the Visiting Team, is to miss opportunities for the many positive outcomes of the CHSVT to reach the people who could use such support in the budgetary process that defines the ability of the CHSVT to continue to provide the best opportunities to the most students.

This is in sharp contrast to the highly effective and fluid communication that takes place internally between teachers within the CHSVT system, who support their frequent conversations with other individual teachers in a monthly, all day faculty meeting which has the stated objective of providing all teachers with as much information about each student within the system that is needed for the proper evaluation of each student's progress.

The uniqueness of CHSVT blurs the lines of communication that may be available to most traditional schools. Because CHSVT is entirely dependent on a budgetary process that changes annually, and the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner who oversee the system are political appointees, the staff of the system lacks the consistency in the budgetary and personnel lines of communication upon which other schools rely. It should be noted, and is reflected in the CHSVT self study, that communication between the Headmaster of the CHSVT and the Commissioner's office has vastly improved in the past few years as the Program Services Director provides the Headmaster with information from and opportunities for input to the office of the Commissioner, who is the ultimate legislative supervisor of the CHSVT beneath the office of the Governor. This communication is transacted through emails, phone calls and weekly meetings, and has been highly beneficial for all parties. As reflected in the self study, face to face communication between administrators and other staff can be restricted due to the geographic distances between the different campuses and the Central Office. Based on the conversations the Visiting Team members had with CHSVT personnel, much time can be spent by administrators shuttling by automobile between far flung campuses and offices. This is endemic to the unique multi campus nature of the CHSVT and would seem to place even more importance on a constantly updated database of student information which is centrally located and coordinated.

Within each facility in the system, faculty have a great deal of autonomy and little direct oversight or supervision of their classes. Faculty would readily admit that they constantly share concerns and seek out assistance from other faculty in the facility. The office spaces are proximate and even shared among the faculty, so this interaction is normal and frequent. There is no provision for a "lead" teacher in any facility, and therefore faculty believe that their main source of oversight is at the Central Office administration level. Faculty seem to be comfortable with this arrangement as they believe that the administrators have a good feel for what is going on in each facility. This is, it appears, primarily a function of the confidence and trust the faculty place in the present administrators, and therefore could be subject to change if the personnel in those offices were to change. In the recent past, ad hoc committees were comprised to facilitate communication between the various facilities and the Central Office. Many committees were disbanded between 2011 and 2013. After the previous superintendent (later renamed as Headmaster) resigned in March 2016, the school administrators proposed the formation of a CHSVT Coordinating Committee (C3) of faculty and staff. This committee was organized to complement the

knowledge and skills of the formal leaders in order to more effectively govern the organization and improve communication between facilities and the Central Office. The idea was approved by consensus and elections were held to include representatives from each facility (7) and community campuses (1), Special Education faculty (1) and Central Office staff (1). The first C3 meeting was held on March 18, 2016. As this is only in its early stages of existence, it is difficult to assess the efficacy of such a committee, and the Visiting Team recommends that it be evaluated on a regular basis to insure that it is accomplishing the goals as intended.

The school has also recently adopted a new electronic student information system (Focus) which stores official records of all relevant past information and ongoing assessments of student progress. Files are electronically scanned into the system and stored and maintained at the Central Office, housed on a hosted server. The self study recognizes and staff members represented to the Visiting Team that the maintenance of this database is important for the seamless transfer of relevant student information as students frequently transition from one campus to another. Administrators and faculty acknowledge that timely input of data and personal observations by faculty and staff is critically important and must be done on a regular basis. This is, as echoed by members of the Visiting Team, a high priority.

It was also acknowledged by personnel in some facilities that the communication between the schools and the superintendent's office in the same facility was in need of improvement, as leadership of some facilities admitted that they did not know much about the daily status of schools within their facility and vice versa. This varied greatly from site to site, as some were proud of the level of contact and respect for the schools within their facility. While some faculty preferred to maintain a reasonable distance from the administration of their facility when it was not germane to their work with students, the Visiting Team would recommend that the Central Office looks to evaluate the need for better communication between the schools and the facilities superintendent's offices in general.

Communication between CHSVT faculty and case managers in their facility varies in frequency and quality. The Visiting Team spoke with case managers who met, as a matter of course and practice, with faculty. However, at least one staff member in one campus site expressed disappointment with the lack of contact with case managers, and the Visiting Team feels that such contact needs to be encouraged throughout the CHSVT system. Perhaps the Habits of Mind standards could provide a universal vocabulary that supports the communication goals of each area within the DOC.

As noted above, the Visiting Team believes that much more work needs to be done on external communication with the legislature, which serves as the ultimate budgetary and supervisory authority for the CHSVT. There is a clear need to develop legislative champions who can effectively represent the importance of supporting the needs of the program. The Visiting Team feels that the faculty and students could be the most effective spokespeople for the schools, and recommends having teachers and inmates invite legislators from their districts to their school. The Visiting Team even suggests that the CHSVT should consider putting students in front of legislators at the State House to demystify and put a human face on the mission and progress of the program.

The Visiting Team also believes that administrators need to debunk the concept that it takes 40 teachers for 45 students to get diplomas, a line widely circulated to indicate that the CHSVT is not doing what it needs to do. It is, in the opinion of the Visiting Team and noted by staffers in the system, a misplaced perception of services that does not take into account the agreed upon outcome within the schools that their main goal is not to graduate but to get better. A great deal of student success happens up to the diploma; if the diploma is the only measure of success, much improvement will be missed by parties who could tout their progress.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. In terms of streamlining the communication of important information throughout its system, the CHSVT has taken pains to create committees and improve reliable databases which will facilitate

such communication. In contrast, there remains a need to insure lines of communication are consistently maintained between superintendent offices of each facility, the faculty at each facility's school, and case managers who serve as the important links between students and all levels of staff.

Also, although faculty communicate frequently among each other within each facility and with faculty at other facilities, the external messaging of the appropriate goals and successes of the program needs to be strengthened.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. The new student electronic information system (Focus) provides a beneficial platform for faculty to enter and view student information in a timely manner.
2. Communication between faculty at each facility is frequent and fluid.

Recommendation 1

Develop a plan to share the positive student outcomes to external parties and stakeholders.

Recommendation 2

Develop a communication model that allows for information exchange between the DOC facility superintendent's office and CHSVT faculty at that facility.

Recommendation 3

Encourage open lines of communication between faculty and case managers that take Habits of Mind standards into account as a means of standardizing such communication.

Recommendation 4

Given the early stages of its existence, the CHSVT Coordinating Committee (C3) should be evaluated on a regular basis to insure that it is accomplishing the communication goals as articulated and intended.

Standard 14: Infrastructure

Standard

There are adequate resources (personnel, finances, facilities, equipment, and materials) to provide for the overall institutional needs of the school.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

CHSVT is funded through the Vermont State legislative budget process. Throughout the last several years, the amount of the allocation has decreased however the school administration, faculty and staff have made every effort to evaluate programs and realize every possible cost saving measure possible. In the past two years, CHSVT has faced a growing challenge of funding at adequate levels to provide student services. The CHSVT administration needs to work in tandem with Department of Corrections (DOC) administration and several Vermont legislative committees to assure the school's infrastructure can meet the mission.

The school has centralized purchasing, as much as possible to leverage our buying power and reduce costs. Resources are also found through partnering organizations such as the Vermont Humanities Council, VITA-Learn, Nurturing Fathers, and community volunteer organizations. CHSVT is eligible for federal money through Title 1, IDEA-B, and the Carl Perkins grants. Those funds are utilized to improve student learning in the basic skills areas, promote the increased professional practice of the teachers and support technical education.

The school falls under the state's self-insured insurance policy as administered by the State of Vermont Office of Risk Management (ORM). The ORM serves several functions for the State, including liability claims filed against the State, developing and assessing the premiums to fund the self-insurance funds for the State (workers' compensation and liability), manages commercial insurance policies, certificates of insurance requests, and requests to modify standard state insurance requirements for contracts and grants.

Observations

Of the school facilities visited, the Visiting Team observed that CHSVT has adequate classroom, office and computer lab space given the current student census.

The vast majority of the campuses are owned and maintained by the State of Vermont and meet or exceed all state and federal standards as required by law. Maintenance is not consistent, because each building has its own system. For example, cleaning of the facilities is the responsibility of the individual facility, however, in some places it is provided by the building maintenance, but in other places, school staff assume the responsibility.

The DOC Business Manager stated that ten years ago, the total cost allocated to resources was 20% while 80% was committed to payroll and compensation. Recently, the total cost allocated to resources has been reduced to 6%. Additionally, since the 2006 NEASC accreditation, there has been a 22% reduction in school faculty and staff due to State of Vermont budgetary reductions.

A certified reading specialist is a key component in providing the training and direct instruction necessary for strong literacy skills. Improving reading skills is a critical need for successful reintegration and employment in the community.

Although there is no written current strategic plan, there has been a concerted effort for increased collaboration around long-term program planning between the CHSVT Head of School and the DOC Director of Program Services.

For similar reasons, there is no current technology plan that assesses current needs, student census and budgetary parameters. An Educational Technology Specialist has been added to provide IT support, troubleshooting, and hardware set-up for students and faculty. However, based on interviews conducted by the Visiting Team members with this staff person and faculty members, there is no clear plan or timeline for implementation of Internet readiness at the campus sites.

Faculty at all campus sites visited by the Visiting Team indicated in their interviews that the students need access to the Internet for instructional and curricular materials, current research, interactive websites that present information in multiple formats and to learn and practice opportunities for Internet and database use. Ushering in the availability of the Internet at all CHSVT sites, albeit with the appropriate filters and firewalls, would further position students to be educationally and vocationally prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHSVT has made good progress in this area since the last accreditation. However, a comprehensive infrastructure needs assessment at each CHSVT site would be beneficial when identifying and prioritizing site-specific facility, equipment, and/or technology needs.

CHSVT would benefit from some additional reflection on the consistent forecasting and prioritizing infrastructure needs prior to budgetary allocations.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. Well-appointed and well-maintained school spaces that support learning and prosocial behavior for students.
2. *Throughout the years of budget reductions, the school has remained committed to its students by being creative in how school operations are funded.*
3. *The school works with its DOC and AOE financial managers to leverage resources and ensure that we are in compliance with regulation while providing a quality education to our students.*

Recommendation 1

Conduct an overall infrastructure needs assessment and develop a corresponding plan to address those needs as resources or infrastructure development opportunities may become available and prior to budget allocations.

Standard 15: The Accreditation Process

Standard

The school is fully committed to institutional improvement and to the process of accreditation. The school completed an inclusive self-study, conducted in a spirit of full disclosure and following Association guidelines; responds to Commission recommendations and the requirement to meet all standards; and participates fully in the peer review process, hosting a visiting committee and sending personnel to serve on visiting committees to other institutions.

Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

CHSVT is spread across Vermont in seventeen locations and eight of the campuses are located within correctional facilities. Although these conditions can pose logistical challenges, our campuses work together daily to serve students when they are transferred between facilities (as inmates) or released into communities that are served by our eight community campuses. This ability to work together extends to successfully completing collaborative projects with our colleagues. Technology tools offered through the State of Vermont also helped us to coordinate our efforts to work on the project. All members of the school community were given the opportunity to work on the study using a customized SharePoint website and during monthly faculty meetings throughout the study.

For Part II of the Self Study, each regional Educational Support Team (EST) and Central Office staff reviewed the self-study developed and written in Part I. Each team identified questions, concerns, ideas, recommendations, and commitments associated with the Part I findings from the 13 applicable standards reviews. Each EST drafted a short, narrative report describing the overarching issues that the EST found to be important and prioritized goals based on these issues on April 4, 2016.

The school steering committee drafted a report that drew together these ideas into summary of action-oriented recommendations and issues for discussion. The draft report was reviewed by the entire school and revisions were incorporated into the final Part II report.

Observations

The Visiting Team after reviewing all the elements contained in your self study, surveys and supplementary materials, visiting your campuses and talking with your faculty and many DOC professionals found that your Self

Study Report reflects a carefully conducted review of the life of the CHSVT, including its similarities and differences across all 17 locations and 8 campuses. The process meets all of the requirements as presented in the Manual for School Evaluation.

As the Team visited a variety of facility campuses and community campuses, all campus faculty were aware of our presence. There was inconsistent awareness by some of the corrections personnel about our presence; however, everyone we encountered was welcoming and accommodating. The Visiting Team found everyone that we spoke with was honest and open, including the students, and felt comfortable communicating both strengths and challenges to the Team. This communication allowed the Visiting Team to construct a thoughtful and comprehensive report to support CHSVT's efforts toward school improvement.

Each faculty member worked on four standards during the self study process, first as part of a group completing the standards and then groups shifted and everyone took a second look at the first draft of another standard. Due to distance, Sharepoint and GoToMeeting were used to supplement e-mail and monthly faculty meeting time to complete the committee reports.

CHSVT began this self study in September of 2014 and completed it in May of 2016. This time frame gave the school ample time to complete the process; however, during the same time frame, *both external and internal systemic changes have come in quick succession over the past year and past decade. Changes have affected virtually every aspect of the school considered through the process of NEASC standard review.* Many of these changes are still "in process" and will need to be monitored for possible new challenges and opportunities they may present in the near future.

The Visiting Team reviewed the Action Plan from the 2006 visit and noted that many of the items were not accomplished and remain recommendations from your 2016 Self Study. The following items were noted as issues in both self studies:

- Development of a resource plan.
- Development of a consistent and systematic approach to orientation and training of new faculty.
- Allocation of time and effective facilitation for professional development, professional discussion among teachers on best practices, teaching methods, and teaching resources.
- Procedures for identifying mandated students at campuses and to ensure that referral, registration and enrollment are completed in a timely manner.
- Identification of global measures to assess student learning outcomes.

Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that CHVST self-study reflects a carefully conducted review of the life of the CHSVT. The self study was inclusive of all campus faculty and provided a voice for case managers, correction officers, students and central office DOC representatives and support staff. The self study report identifies areas of commendation and issues requiring further attention and consideration.

The 2006 Self Study was reviewed and it was noted that several issues that were identified at that time have not yet been resolved and remain areas of concern in the current study.

Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the following:

1. CHSVT for its commitment to the self study process and to the creativity used to include all faculty in spite of the distance barrier. Share Point was a great system to share resources, work and ideas.

2. The administration of CHSVT and VTDOC for supporting the process through the consistent allocation of time where teachers could come together and work on the standards and the overall Self-Study.

Recommendation 1

The Visiting Team recommends faculty, administration and governance of CHSVT maintain their commitment to the NEASC program improvement model by developing a detailed action plan for the recommendations made in the self study process and by the Team visit. By creating timelines, with named staff members who are responsible for each action, accountability will be ensured. Addressing the recommendations and committing time and resources will continue to improve the CHSVT.

Self-Study Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion

Self-Study Part II

Part II asks the school to draw together what it has learned from its self-study and prioritize these ideas into a thoughtful, reflective, creative summary of the school's most significant concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future. This may include both action items and discussion items.

Overview

Descriptive paragraphs which accurately describe the school's findings may be taken directly from the *Self-Study Report* and are in italics.

The Visiting Team support the following as articulated by the Community High School of Vermont:

Community High School of Vermont has seen many changes since our last accreditation visit. Some of these changes have been very welcome and others have been very bitter pills to swallow. We have had internal struggles as a school, both internally with our department and with the Vermont State Legislature. While we have not overcome all of the challenges, we have a clearer understanding of what the next few years might look like for CHSVT. The self-study process has really allowed us to hone in on many issues that we will address as our process continues.

Many of the findings and recommendation enumerated in our Self-Study result from a longstanding cultural split between the Department of Corrections (DOC) and CHSVT. While the school has always existed within the department, the two have been isolated from each other. There are many factors that led to that isolation, but a major factor has been a failure to discuss and integrate the mission of the school as it relates to the mission of the DOC. Each campus has largely operated independently from the associated correctional facility or probation and parole office and has been led by the school's administration, rather than facility or office supervisors. Locally, campuses also contend with issues of isolation as a result of the geographical distances and varied settings that demarcate the school.

Despite these challenges, the school has worked to create consistency for students across campuses since our last NEASC accreditation. As we enter into this next phase of accreditation, we are also entering into restructuring plans to work more collaboratively within the DOC. The accreditation process has helped us to focus on three major goals for improvement that will allow for greater integration with other DOC services.

Observations

The Visiting Committee recommends that the Community High School of Vermont add an action plan to Part II of the Self-Study to address the major recommendations in this report. In addition, the Visiting Committee made concrete recommendations within the body of this report. CHSVT should review each recommendation and develop a plan to address them in Part II of the Self-Study. The Visiting Committee applauds the analysis of the Community High School of Vermont and is confident that the dedicated administrators and staff will do everything in their power to address them in Part II.

Finally, the Visiting Team hopes that you share, with pride, the major commendations in this report.

Conclusions

The Visiting Committee recommends, without reservation, that the Community High School of Vermont receive full accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Major Commendations and Recommendations

Major Commendations

1. The energy of the staff at Community High School of Vermont is palpable and inspiring. The depth of care, empathy, patience, and compassion the faculty and staff have for the students was evident to the Visiting Team through both interviews and observations. Staff morale is improving since the self-study. In work that is difficult and physically and emotionally draining, the Visiting Team saw enthusiasm and professionalism at all levels of the organization.
2. The mission of the Community High School of Vermont is infused throughout the program. This is evidenced by the strong commitment of staff to providing quality educational services to every student. The mission is clearly articulated by staff and students. It is found in written materials and posted throughout the campus.
3. The Visiting Committee was impressed by the overwhelmingly positive reports of the level of administrative support provided to personnel. Employees felt that the administrators were advocates for their needs, and that issues and requests raised by employees were considered thoughtfully by administration.
4. Students receive one to one attention and the opportunity for extremely specialized instruction that is tailored to the unique needs of this population. Teachers at the Community High School of Vermont are exceedingly skilled, careful, gentle, and patient. The Visiting Team found them inspiring to watch.
5. The School is truly living its Mission through its commitment to the Living, Learning, and Working competency-based portfolio.

Major Recommendation 1

The Visiting Team strongly recommends that no additional funding cuts be made to the Community High School of Vermont. In FY 2014, total appropriations for correctional education stood at \$4.7M. The FY 2017 appropriation stands at \$3.3M. The Visiting Team can not emphasize enough that further cuts will threaten the quality of the program and may put its future accreditation in jeopardy.

Major Recommendation 2

There is a need to improve the quantity and quality of internal and external communication about the important work of the School. This includes developing an internal marketing plan to create opportunities for stakeholders to learn more about CHSVT, to appreciate its strengths and to fight for adequate funding. CHSVT needs champions in the Department of Corrections and in the Vermont Legislature. A variety of data could be used to support this effort including attendance, graduation rates, number of proficiency standards met and vocational and work readiness certificates awarded. A plan to track alumni outcome data, such as employment, postsecondary education and community service, could also be used to demonstrate the efficacy of CHSVT programming and to elicit state-level support.

Major Recommendation 3

The Community High School of Vermont should build on the strong momentum and quality of its program by addressing some key areas. These include a comprehensive plan and model for professional development that

address the unique needs of the teaching staff and allow them to meet the expectations of their multifaceted roles. This should include orientation and mentoring for all new teachers and development and implementation of an effective and comprehensive supervision and evaluation system that informs professional development planning.

Major Recommendation 4

The Community High School of Vermont should develop a multi-year technology plan with dates for deliverables. The plan should include when the Internet will be installed in classrooms as well as the replacement and updating of hardware.

Major Recommendation 5

The Community High School of Vermont should continue to develop avenues for effective communication between CHSVT and DOC so that the three key components of education, confinement, and program services are coordinated and integrated to best benefit the students. This could include professional development efforts to build better collaboration despite the, at times, competing demands among all levels of CHSVT and DOC staff.

Ratings Table

Ratings Table

For each applicable standard, please:

1. Enter the school's self-rating and the visiting team's rating in the first two columns.
2. Enter an X in the column for "Failed Rating" if the visiting committee's rating is an F1 or F2.
3. Enter an X in "Differing Rating" if the visiting committee's rating differs from the school's self-rating.
4. Enter an X in the last column to indicate that you have provided evidence for a failed or differing rating within the text of the *Visiting Committee Report*.

Skip any standards which do not apply.

	School's Self-Rating	VC Rating	Failed Rating?	Differing Rating?	Evidence Provided for Failed/Differing Rating?
Standard 1: Mission	P1	P1			
Standard 2: Governance	P2	P2			
Standard 3: Enrollment	P2	P2			
Standard 4: Program	P1	P2		X	X
Standard 5: Experience of the Students	P1	P1			
Standard 6: Resources to Support the Program	P2	P2			
Standard 7: Early Childhood Program	NA	NA			
Standard 8: Residential Program and/or Homestay Program	NA	NA			
Standard 9: Faculty	P2	P2			
Standard 10: Administration	P2	P2			
Standard 11: Evaluation and Assessment	P2	P2			
Standard 12: Health and Safety	P2	P1		X	X
Standard 13: Communication	P2	P2			
Standard 14: Infrastructure	P2	P2			
Standard 15: The Accreditation Process	P1	P1			