New England Association of School and Colleges, Inc.

Commission on Public Schools

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Report of the Visiting Team for Somerville High School

Somerville, MA

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Carl Johnson, Chair
Alicia Kersten, Principal

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Somerville is an urban city adjacent to Boston covering approximately 4.1 square miles, with a population of just over 79,000 according to the 2021 census. Expanding public transportation has led to gentrification, dramatically changing the city ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically and leading to a shrinking "middle." Some of the aspects of the city that attracted people, such as ethnic restaurants and multicultural experiences still exist, but are decreasing as the cost of housing rises. The median income is $102,311, and the per capita income is $53,279. The poverty level is 11.3 percent.The 2021 census states that for those over the age of twenty-five, 91.4 percent have a high school diploma or higher, with 65.7 percent achieving a bachelor's degree or higher.

Somerville Public Schools consists of eleven schools: one comprehensive high school, one alternative 9-12 high school/alternative 6-8 school, seven elementary schools,one elementary charter school, and one high school charter school. In 2021-22, these schools served 4,673 students. The high school is a comprehensive high school with a career and technical education program available to all students who wish to pursue that pathway.

In the 2021-2022 school year, 56.4 percent of the school's student population spoke a first language other than English, and district enrollment by race/ethnicity stood at 10.9 percent African-American, 5.8 percent Asian, 47.3 percent Hispanic, .2 percent Native American, 33.5 percent white, .2 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 2.1 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic. We are proud of our diversity every day and see it as a cause for celebration; one way we honor it is through the annual multicultural fair that both students and staff look forward to. More importantly, we strive to show pride in our students every day.

Somerville High School regularly celebrates its students, including the quarterly Highlander awards, an annual academic awards night, an annual career and technical education banquet, theater arts and music productions in the fall/winter and spring, an annual fine arts showcase in May, and an annual Highlander Association awards night for athletics. For seniors, a 111-year tradition called Class Day, where seniors may choose to have their proudest accomplishment read aloud, takes place the week before graduation.

The per pupil for fiscal year 2021 was $23,046, which is above the state average. The budget for the school year 2021-2022 was $99,566,946, of which $84,267,002 was from local appropriations. The City of Somerville is generous with its budget, particularly in terms of taking care of targeted needs for students and staff.

The dropout rate for 2020-2021 decreased from 1.1 percent to 1.6 percent in 2019-2020. Over that same time period, attendance rates increased to 94.8 percent in 2021 from 94.1 percent in 2020. Seventy-four percent of students from the class of 2021 went on to pursue either two- or four-year degrees with another four percent electing some other type of post-secondary training program. Two percent planned to enter the military. Fourteen percent stated that they were going to enter the workforce after graduation; this figure includes those who plan to continue their career path from our career and technical education program.

Somerville High School partners with many area businesses for employment and internships, including CVS CareMark, MassHire, Local 103 (Electrical Union), Local 328 (Carpentry Union), and several other local establishments. The Somerville Mayor's Program also employs students every year. Students may also participate in dual enrollment or early college courses through Cambridge College and Bunker Hill Community College. Several other colleges and universities offer professional development for staff as well as opportunities for summer programs for students. Lastly, this year we began a collaborative internship with Harvard Radcliffe.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

Core values:

- **Perseverance**: We work hard to develop a growth mindset, to engage in productive struggle, and to be drivers of our own learning
- **Integrity**: We are responsible for our behavior, actions, and choices
- **Responsibility**: We take ownership of own learning by reflecting on learning, being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses, and taking the initiative to improve
- **Open-mindedness**: Will will engage effectively in a diverse world (locally, nationally, and globally) and demonstrate compassion, empathy and commitment to social justice

Beliefs:

- We will encourage students to explore their passions.
- We will help students become effective communicators.
- We will make strong connections with families and the community.
- We will create opportunities for students to engage with the world through authentic and equitable learning experiences.

Vision of the Graduate (Highlander Habits):

Growth Mindset

- Persevere through difficult tasks and obstacles
- Take ownership of own learning by reflecting on learning, being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses, and taking the initiative to improve
- Be willing to take risks
- Demonstrate passion and curiosity for learning

Physical and Emotional Wellness

- Make healthy physical and emotional choices
- Build and maintain healthy personal relationships
- Identifies who/when/how/where to seek help
- Build self-confidence and pursue their passions
- Are independent and self-sufficient
- Maintains a healthy balance of work, play, rest

Communication

- Deliver information and ideas effectively in multiple formats
- Write with precision, clarity and coherence appropriate to task and audience
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, values, attitudes, and intentions
- Advocate for their future and communicate personal values

Collaboration

- Share responsibility for collaborative work
- Value individual contributions made by each team member
- Work effectively in diverse teams
- Build consensus while making decisions

Critical and Creative Thinking

- Analyze and evaluate information critically and competently
- Gather, filter, and synthesize from a variety of sources
- Develop ideas and solutions based upon data and strong content knowledge

- Adapt knowledge and skills to new environments

Culturally Competent Citizenship

- Has awareness of their own and others' cultural heritage
- Engage effectively in a diverse world - locally, nationally, and globally
- Demonstrate compassion, empathy and a commitment to social justice
- Value and use the arts as a fundamental form of human expression
- Communicate effectively in multiple languages

Post - Secondary Readiness

- Demonstrate academic and professional excellence (including content mastery and academic, technological, and vocational skills in reading, writing, and math) required for the post-secondary program of their choice
- Set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-sensitive goals
- Acquire strong organizational skills to support academic and personal growth
- Possess financial literacy and basic money management skills

Responsibility

- Behave with integrity; are responsible for their behavior, actions, and choices
- Are reliable, punctual, and professional with proper etiquette
- Demonstrate digital literacy and citizenship and a responsible use of social media
- Interact appropriately and positively with adults and peers

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning Culture

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

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

STUDENT LEARNING

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

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

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Professional Practices

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

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

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning Support

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

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

LEARNING RESOURCES

Learning Resources

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

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

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Reflection

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee composed of the professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's self-reflection and Accreditation process. A steering committee, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the Accreditation process. The steering committee organized an appropriate committee or committees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people by completing the school self-reflection.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission on Public Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, vision of the graduate, and unique student population. The school used questionnaires developed by the Commission on Public Schools to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-reflection.

In addition, the professional staff was required to read and vote on Part 2 of the self-reflection to ensure that all voices were heard related to the alignment of the school to the Standards for Accreditation. All professional staff members were expected to participate in the self-reflection process either by participating on a committee or by participating in discussion and evidence gathering to support the school's alignment to the Standards.

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of five members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Collaborative Conference visit to Somerville High School in Somerville, Massachusetts. The visiting team members spent two days conducting a visit; reviewed the self-reflection documents, which had been prepared for their examination; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and observed

classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Commission on Public Schools' Standards for Accreditation. The team also reviewed the proposed priority areas for the school's growth plan to be developed as part of the Accreditation process.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included within each section of the report. The report includes commendations and recommendations that, in the visiting team's judgment, will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and implement its plan for growth and improvement.

This report of the findings of the visiting team will be forwarded to the Commission on Public Schools, which will make a decision on the Accreditation of the school.

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Narrative

Somerville High School provides a safe environment for its students, faculty, and staff. The school was recently constructed and has all the safety features of a modern school building. There is a main entrance that is monitored throughout the day by security personnel. All doors are secured and accessed by a key card. The school has strict visitor protocols in place to maintain the safety of the building, including the use of lanyards and staff escorts. The school added five community engagement specialists who monitor the building and provide student interventions in common areas. The school conducts safety drills throughout the year, and there is a district-level position that oversees the training of staff and preparedness. The school utilizes school-level teams to create safety plans for individual students. The school additionally has a mediation program facilitated by trained staff and student leaders to prevent student conflicts from escalating. The school also utilizes school counselors and adjustment counselors to assist students needing support.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Narrative

Somerville High School has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. In 2017 the school began a multi-year project examining the school's core beliefs about learning. This work was completed by committees comprising administrators, staff, students, and community members. The school revised its core values and beliefs about learning from this work. This work also led to the creation of "Highlander Habits," the name used for the school's portrait of the graduate. The Highlander Habits include the skills of growth mindset, physical and emotional wellness, collaboration, communication, culturally competent citizenship, critical and creative thinking, post-secondary readiness, and responsibility. Recently the school reviewed these documents through an equity lens which led to one of the skills being changed from professionalism to responsibility. School-wide rubrics have been created for each skill and are being implemented in the school.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Narrative

Somerville High School does not yet have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that include the required components. The school has developed a modified Understanding by Design (UbD) template and several lesson planning templates which some content areas utilize. Staff are given time regularly through the early release schedule to complete curriculum work. There is a process for auditing and analyzing courses for compliance utilizing the new curriculum and lesson planning formats. Assessment practices are more consistent within content areas but are not universally adopted across the school. Some courses are moving toward developing and implementing more consistent use of curriculum templates and incorporating and embedding the Highlander habits into all content areas and courses.

Rating
Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Narrative

The school has a current school improvement plan. The 2023-2024 school year plan includes two focus areas. The school improvement plan goals identified by the school and the NEASC Priority Areas for Growth are strongly aligned. The school uses an inclusive process to create the school improvement plan each year. A school improvement council of administrators, parents, staff, school committee members, and students monitors the implementation and growth associated with the school improvement plan throughout the school year. The committee meets once a month. The school aligns its school improvement plan with the district improvement plan.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 4.1a - Learning Support

Narrative

Somerville High School has intervention strategies designed to support learners. The school has a variety of support classes and formal interventions that are offered to students. These include reading intervention, math skills courses, academic support classes, and social-emotional lessons for all students. The school utilizes a RISE program to assist students who need additional academic and social-emotional support. The school also uses a BRIDGE program staffed by trained personnel to assist students further with individual needs and help students transition back to school from hospitalizations or extended absences. The school also has a newcomer program to support students who have recently immigrated to the United States. The school utilizes a student support team model to identify students who need further support and intervention. The team is comprised of administrators, school counselors, and school nurses. Teachers can refer students for additional support. The school also has a Tier 1 learning support guide shared with all faculty which outlines interventions for academics, attendance, discipline, and social-emotional needs.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Narrative

The Somerville High School building supports the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The building was completed in 2021 and is a model school building in numerous ways for the 21st century. The buildings and facilities are clean and well-maintained. There are school, district, and city personnel who are responsible for the upkeep of the building. There is great pride in completing the new building and the opportunities it provides students. The school complies with all state and federal laws. All local fire, health, and safety regulations are followed, and the school maintains records of this compliance. The school has numerous career and technical areas that are well-designed and outfitted for the successful delivery of those programs. The school must utilize some off-site facilities for athletic fields due to a lack of space at the building, which requires busing students. The school is completing the last phase of the project, with grounds behind the building anticipated to be completed in 2024.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Standard 1 - Learning Culture

Narrative

Somerville High School provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity and thought across the school. The school was completed in 2021 and features all the attributes of a modern building regarding school safety. The school utilizes secure building practices throughout the day and limits access through entrances. The school has numerous security technology and structures in place to ensure the safety of students and staff. The school recently hired five community engagement specialists deployed throughout the building to provide security and low-level student interventions. These individuals meet regularly with the administrative team to review safety procedures. The school also employs adjustment counselors who provide immediate and ongoing intervention to students who need social-emotional support. The school has a robust mediation program staffed by trained counselors and student leaders. They work to resolve student conflicts before they escalate and provide support when confrontations do occur. The school also has a program that supports recent immigrants to the United States through multi-lingual programs. The school has many multi-lingual students and has put various supports in place to ensure their success. The school has numerous community partnerships to assist and support its students. These include Cambridge Health Alliance, Teen Connection, Becoming a Man, Working on Womanhood, Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, and Breakthrough Boston. The school also has drug and alcohol counselors available for students. A community health center is open, and a non-profit dental group partnership provides students with free dental care. The school is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts. This is evident in both school and district documents, as well as in practice in the building through multiple interactions. The school recently reviewed its vision document through an equity lens. This led to a realization that one of the Highlander Habits was culturally biased, resulting in a revision to the document. A school-based equity team provides professional development, resources, and guidance to the school community around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging issues. The school employs a part-time school-based equity specialist who works alongside the district's director for equity and excellence. The district also employs a district equity coach to support staff across all buildings.The staff read*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* to guide a greater understanding of practices that could be implemented in classrooms to increase belonging for students of various backgrounds.

Somerville High School often uses its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate to drive student learning, professional practices, learning support, and the provision and allocation of learning resources. In 2017 the school was awarded a Wilder Learning Ecosystem grant from the Barr Foundation. This grant funded a multi-year project reviewing and revising the school's core values and beliefs about learning. From this work, the school also created the Highlander Habits. These are the portrait of the graduate skills the school aspires to have all students master before graduation. The school's stated vision is "At Somerville High School, students explore their passions, connect with their school and communities, and engage with the world around them through authentic and equitable learning experiences. Graduates are empowered to achieve their goals and contribute to a more just world." The Highlander Habits contain the skills of a growth mindset, physical and emotional wellness, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, responsibility, culturally competent citizenship, and post-secondary readiness. The school has created rubrics for all the Highlander Habits to measure student progress and achievement. The rubric for responsibility was used universally this year across all classrooms. This was a primary focus for the building this year as the school leveraged its vision of graduate work. The school is working to embed these skills in its curriculum revision and design work to ensure that the skills are taught with fidelity across the building. The school has also incorporated these skills into their restorative practices and draws students' attention to them when completing restorative techniques. Somerville High School has incorporated the Highlander Habits into performance-based assessments across disciplines at the school. Members of each department received professional development training on creating these assessments. All of these assessments have skills from the Highlander Habits embedded in them. The school recently added Highlander Habits as a universal part of classroom grade books. Each quarter, the school selects "Highlander of the Quarter" award winners to be recognized at a celebratory breakfast. The school also selects one student per community as the Highlander of the Year and is recognized at the annual awards ceremony in June.

The school community takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community. The school uses the beginning of the school year to ensure all students and staff have a shared understanding of expectations. This is done through assemblies and the distribution of handbooks. The school also uses this time to review the Highlander Habits with students and sees these as guiding other expectations at the school. The school has a variety of academic offerings for students, including advanced placement, dual enrollment, work-based learning, and internships. The school proudly offers students over fifty after-school clubs and a full complement of athletic opportunities. The school partners with the Youth Guidance organization to provide the "Becoming a Man" and "Working on Womanhood" programs, which meet the needs of diverse learners. The school ensures that all students receive lessons on social-emotional health. The school is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work for all members of the school community. The survey shows that students feel the school treats students from different backgrounds with respect and values them as individuals. The physical building also facilitates this sense of belonging for students by creating numerous spaces where students can gather and find places to make their own. The school also offers a wealth of programs both in the traditional academic sense and in the career and technical fields that allow students to pursue their passions and interests. Somerville High School also takes seriously its responsibility to meet the needs of recent immigrants to the United States. They have multiple programs and services to assist not just the students but their families as well.

The Somerville High School community's professional culture often demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection. The school has an established educator evaluation system that encourages reflection and growth among its staff. Educators engage in a yearly self-assessment and set professional practice and student learning goals that align with schoolwide initiatives. New educators and those in new roles receive ongoing support through peer mentoring programs facilitated by the district's educator development team, which includes teacher leaders from various schools. The instructional leadership team at the school places a strong emphasis on promoting equity and inclusion in the classroom. All staff members participate in working groups to strengthen their practices and enhance their ability to create an inclusive learning environment. The school has also incorporated strategies from a consultant at the Landmark School to create more inclusive and supportive classroom practices, particularly for students with language-based learning differences. The school actively participates in research studies through partnerships with prestigious institutions such as Boston University, Harvard, Cambridge College, and UMass-Boston. These collaborations provide valuable opportunities for self-reflection and learning from education experts. This research has already identified areas for growth and has led to implementation of new initiatives focused on college and career readiness programming. Collaboration among educators is facilitated through department-based professional learning communities (PLCs) and cross-department grade-level teams. These groups meet regularly to discuss shared students, identify areas of concern, plan interventions, and communicate with all stakeholders. PLC meetings also serve as a platform for aligning instructional approaches, curriculum development, and assessment planning to enhance the overall academic experience for students. All educators are required to complete a determined number of district-offered professional development (PD) hours. These PD modules are predominantly facilitated by educators within the district, providing opportunities for collaboration between departments and communities. The school encourages stakeholders to propose changes through the "proposal for change checklist." This process allows anyone at the school to submit substantive changes to the school following specific criteria and the determined procedure.

Somerville High School's culture strongly promotes intellectual risk-taking and personal and professional growth. Teachers are all members of professional learning communities and grade-level interdisciplinary teams that meet outside departments. Educators with similar professional practice goals also belong to interdisciplinary working groups to help collaborate on their goals. The school offers teachers professional development opportunities throughout the year, often facilitated by members of the school's faculty. The school also uses outside educational institutions and experts to provide professional development to teachers on various topics, including a recent focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work. The district supports teacher leadership through numerous stipend-level positions in the school. These include academic coaching positions, team leaders, and instructional leaders. The district supports teachers through an innovation specialist who connects educators with community partners to further educational programs and opportunities. The district also has a communication specialist who supports teachers with grant opportunities to provide new programs or resources

for students. The school employs schoolwide homework and late work guidelines that allow for revision and demonstration of growth. The school has built-in days at the end of each semester to enable students' final opportunities to work with teachers to complete or revise assignments. The school regularly reminds students of growth opportunities during X-block/advisory time. These include information about tutoring services, job opportunities, counseling resources, internship opportunities, college and career workshops, and extracurricular activities available at the school. Students can choose to use time during X-block to attend workshops and assemblies focused on career and college readiness. The school regularly incorporates student voices into school decision-making. Students serve as representatives on the school committee, members of the school leadership council, the school improvement council, and various committees as needed. Students are encouraged to provide feedback on the school's direction as a learning institution.

Somerville High School has an inclusive definition of leadership and gives school leaders the authority and responsibility to improve student learning. The school has two co-principals, one associate principal, one assistant principal who oversees career and technical education, four assistant principals (APs), and an AP team leader. One of the co-principals was a long-time leader at the school and was rehired this year to assist in the transition for the newly appointed principal. This position will be eliminated at the end of this academic year. The associate principal oversees eleven department supervisors who directly supervise the educators in their departments. The school utilizes a community structure with four communities at Somerville High School. Each community has an assistant principal that oversees it along with a dean, school counselors, and associated office personnel. The community leadership teams meet regularly to review students who need further intervention support. The community teams also propose priority areas to be incorporated into the school improvement plan for the following academic year. The school also uses a school improvement council to finalize the improvement plan for the building. This council consists of administrators, educators, community members, and students. The school committee supports the school's leaders and believes in the vision and core beliefs of the school. The school committee is aware of the Highlander Habits and supports their implementation across the school culture. The district leadership supports the school leadership team and its educators in numerous ways. There is a strong coherence between district goals and school goals. The district has also created specific pathways for teacher leaders and encourages educators to take on formal and informal leadership opportunities.

The Somerville High School culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. Due to the school's work with the Barr Foundation to revise and reimagine its vision and core values, civic engagement came to the forefront of these ideals. One of the identified skills in the Highlander Habits is culturally competent citizenship. This skill has specific indicators encouraging students to "engage effectively in a diverse world - locally, nationally, and globally" and "demonstrate compassion, empathy, and a commitment to social justice." The school has staff and student equity teams continually examining school policies and practices to ensure alignment with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging beliefs. The school uses trained peer mentors in a recognized mentoring program to resolve student conflict. This year the school has focused on the Highlander Habit of Responsibility. All classes use the responsibility rubric in their courses to create a consistent understanding of personal responsibility among students. The school has numerous clubs and activities focused on social responsibility. These clubs participate in fundraisers and activities to raise awareness and support the community.

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- school board
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 2 - Student Learning

Narrative

Somerville High School has a written document outlining a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. The school is beginning to develop and implement procedures that will provide feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving the vision of the graduate.The "Highlander Habits" outline the eight dispositions that make up the vision of the graduate: growth mindset, physical and emotional wellness, communication, collaboration, critical and creative thinking, culturally competent citizenship, post-secondary readiness, and responsibility. The school worked collaboratively to create school-wide rubrics to assess these competencies. This year, the school has implemented the rubric for responsibility competency in all classrooms. Many teachers use common curriculum maps, lesson plan templates, common assessments, and rubrics that address the skills. However, the "Highlander Habits" are not consistently embedded into all curricula and instruction across all departments.

The school does not yet have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that include units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate. The school uses a modified Understanding by Design (UBD) unit planning template. This template is being used across the school to update and revise the curriculum in a consistent format. The curriculum contains essential questions and connects to the Highlander Habits, standard skills, and content to be taught. The curriculum also includes areas for higher-order thinking and transferable skills. In continuance of this work, the school is working to have real-world connections in the curriculum. These are specific areas in the curriculum where teachers are to make direct connections to real-world application of content and skills for students. As the school reviews and revises the curriculum, they are committed to doing this through an equity lens and making adjustments as needed. The school provides staff professional development and planning time to update curriculum materials in a more consistent and standardized format. Staff have received professional development on common lesson plan design models and the culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) model. These efforts bring greater coherence to instruction and lesson planning across departments. Staff are committed to developing project-based experiences and assessments within all content areas. This work will further consistency in the student experience across departments and courses. The school recently implemented common grading categories and weighting. As the school continues to review, revise, and create curricula, they are doing so with the explicit intention of embedding the Highlander Habits into the curriculum. As this work continues, this will lead to even further coherence for students across disciplines.

The curriculum ensures that learners demonstrate a depth of understanding over a breadth of knowledge. Students have opportunities in various areas to demonstrate a depth of understanding through an extensive program of studies, including comprehensive elective programming for students. Student feedback is solicited to suggest new course offerings at the school that will meet student interests and needs. The school offers a wide range of electives in the academic areas, allowing students to go deeper in studying academic areas than just traditional survey courses. These opportunities also include the option to participate in the acclaimed CTE program. Students can make real-world connections through a variety of community and business partnerships. These align with the knowledge and skills taught during courses in students' junior and senior years. There are numerous examples of projects and assignments from students detailing their ability to go deeper into a subject or content area. Students in the electrical classroom were working on running an electrical system in mock houses. Students in the plumbing classroom were observed running plumbing in a simulated room. Students in a history class were researching aspects of the Renaissance and preparing presentations for the course. Students are encouraged in the CTE program to pursue pathways that allow for deep study of a selected area, in many cases leading to certifications. There are plans to expand these pathway opportunities to students outside the CTE program to allow this rich content investigation in all areas. Staff are working to develop additional project-based learning opportunities and authentic learning opportunities within their courses. Many courses are progressing toward creating explicit connections to the skills outlined in the school's vision of a graduate, but it remains inconsistent across all content areas.

Somerville High School extensively uses instructional practices that are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Implementing the open honors program at SHS has led to more deliberate differentiation in the

classroom. Students in these courses can choose from the college preparatory or honors level work. This program has required teachers to differentiate within classes to meet students' individual needs. This concept has shown success in some of the content areas it has implemented. While some teachers strategically differentiate, individualize, and personalize learning based on student needs, this is not present across the school. In a Biology course, the teacher uses multiple strategies to assist English learners with a vocabulary lesson. This includes stating the word, asking students to repeat it, physically demonstrating the term for students, and having a Google sheet showing pictures of the vocabulary. In an English classroom, the students read a chapter of "Just Mercy" as a class. The teacher and co-teacher provide visuals to students to help them understand during the reading. Many teachers use formative assessment strategies such as exit tickets or entrance activities to check for understanding at the end of class to guide their planning for the next lesson. In PreCalculus class, the students worked deliberate groupings on "Do Now" activities while the teacher circulated the room to check for understanding. In CTE classes, students work in collaborative groups consistently while the teacher checks progress as they complete work on real-world models. Most inclusion classes follow a co-teaching model. Further professional development and collaboration will ensure consistency across classrooms and departments using co-teaching. Support staff and coaches are available to push in with individual students, help teachers modify curriculum and instructional strategies, and assist in data collection to help meet the needs of individual students. The school has a "Tier 1 Guide to Supporting Students" to aid teachers in providing proper interventions across all classrooms. As this guide is continually used and updated, the school will have greater consistency in its implementation.

Students at Somerville High School are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning. Staff have begun utilizing standardized templates and are working toward implementing project-based learning tasks in many disciplines for each unit of study. The school is committed to developing performance-based assessments in all departments. In the CTE classes, students use real-world stations and tools to complete authentic work in their disciplines—students in HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and carpentry complete projects using real-world situations. Students in many courses are provided choices within lessons and opportunities to demonstrate learning in various ways but not in all content areas. Students in a ceramics course choose from a selection of options to demonstrate their learning and activities for the class based on their skill level. Students in a drafting class choose extension activities after completing the standard assignment for all students. Students selecting the CTE track can learn in real-world situations outside school through co-ops and internships. The CTE labs are all designed to allow project-based learning and real-world learning in the classroom. The electrical, automotive, plumbing, HVAC, and other CTE labs all have authentic models, mock-ups, and equipment that students will encounter in these trades. For example, in the HVAC lab, students can access the room of the building in a purposefully designed space so they can work on heating and cooling units found on commercial and residential buildings. Students have access to any job site's tools, equipment, and resources in these related fields. There are multiple opportunities for students to participate in work-based learning and internships through community partners. These include CVS Caremark, MassHire, partnerships with local trade unions, and others. In the past, the school has also had programs where community members were invited to the school to receive services from students. The culinary and automotive programs will start their programs again soon, where community members can come to the school to eat at the restaurant or get their car serviced by students, respectively. These were only put on hold because of the move to the new building and determining the unique logistics of getting people into the building during the school day. There is a daycare in the school that students participate in during the school day in their elective child development classes. While there is always an opportunity to expand these offerings, the school has many options for students to lead their learning.

Learners engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills frequently. In many courses, students can engage in activities that prioritize a deeper understanding of content and skills, creativity, and making real-world connections. Students in most CTE classes are generally involved in deliberately designed learning and assessment experiences that are cognitively challenging. They also require learners to develop and exercise various thinking skills and learning dispositions. In an English class, students create infographics on the dangers of social media to be displayed in the school. Each group is responsible for a different social media platform and doing the research and graphic design. Students in a theater class create and write their own short plays. The other students in the class give direct feedback using a protocol under the instructor's guidance. Departments are in varying places in creating and implementing project-based learning and performance-based assessments across courses. Students in CTE classes continually engage with challenging real-world problems and show persistence as they solve problems in their field. Students in the FabLab create projects and determine how best to bring their designs to life using the resources in the lab. A student in the culinary class was a waiter during the visiting team's lunch on the first day. In talking with the teacher and para-educator, it became apparent

that this student had started the year afraid to interact with customers or take an order. Through persistence and the support of the teachers, the student advanced to a clearly apparent confidence level.

Learners at Somerville High School consistently demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Based on this analysis, staffutilizes early release time to assess data and make recommendations for adjusting instruction. Students are provided a syllabus and daily learning objectives in most courses via google classroom. Specific and measurable criteria for success are often supplied to learners before assessments. Staff across departments inconsistentlycommunicate the school's vision of the graduate and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed before each unit of study. The school continues developing performance-based assessments that will be integrated into each department. Teachers and departments are receiving professional development on these assessments. These will help the school provide increased authentic assessment opportunities to students at SHS. Students report using formative assessment strategies in their classrooms frequently. Exit tickets, do nows, Kahoot, Quizzz, and google forms are all examples students gave of formative assessments being used in the school. Students also report that teachers use one-on-one conferencing and frequently circulate the classroom to check understanding during lessons. Students also stated that they sometimes have a choice in their assessments and how they demonstrate learning in a class. Students gave examples of being able to choose a medium to show learning, whether it is a project, slideshow, writing, or other format. Students in a history class could either write a poem or create a piece of art to demonstrate their learning from a unit on the Harlem Renaissance. In an English classroom, students read excerpts from Macbeth, and the teacher asks questions of the group to check for understanding. The school recently added the Highlander Habit of Responsibility as a common grading criterion for all classes. Students receive a grade using a common rubric at least twice per quarter to show their progress regarding the Highlander Habit. The school provides students several opportunities to demonstrate their learning to authentic audiences. The science fair, art fair, drama performances, and other activities are all examples of this type of assessment.

Learners frequently have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning. The school has implemented universal late work and homework policies across the school. These policies allow students opportunities for make-up and revision of assignments. This is aligned with the school's beliefs in persistence and a growth mindset. Students often have multiple opportunities over time to demonstrate their learning. The school had dedicated days at the end of each semester to allow students to revise or complete missing assignments. Teachers frequently give students systematic and specific corrective verbal or written feedback. Students and teachers use technology, mainly features in the Google Suite, to give and receive feedback in real time. Students report that teachers often use one-on-one and class meetings to provide feedback. Students also state that it is common practice for teachers to circulate in the room during lessons and give specific feedback to students during independent and group work activities. Rubrics are widely used across the school and are often given out before the assessment so students can clearly understand how to be successful. Students can also revise and improve their work in many courses. The school is developing separate grading/reporting and feedback for the Highlander Habits, which is only evident for some skills. The school has implemented the use of the responsibility rubric aligned with the Highlander Habits in every course this year. Students regularly receive feedback on progress toward mastering this skill in classrooms across departments.

Learners at Somerville High School often use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. Students use technology to communicate clearly and creatively. All students at the school are issued Chromebooks. The school uses the Google Suite as its primary learning platform. Students use technology in classrooms to present ideas and communicate with each other continually. Students use technology toaccess, support, document, and supplement their learning. Students in multiple classes are expected to complete research independently using available resources. Students complete a senior capstone project, documenting their learning throughout the project. Students construct knowledge, create, and problem-solve. For example, students in a history class research the Harlem Renaissance and produce visual art or poems to demonstrate their learning. Students in an English class use graphic programs to create an infographic on the dangers of social media. Students in a drafting class used technical programs to complete computer architectural drawings. Students in the CTE program regularly problem-solve using the advanced technology they have in multiple labs throughout the building. Students in the fabrication lab can access advanced machining and design equipment. Students in the construction and metal lab have access to advanced CNC mills found in advanced manufacturing companies. The technology available to students at Somerville High School is impressive and allows students to interact with real-world equipment they will encounter in their post-

secondary lives.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- school board
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- student work
- students
- teachers

Standard 3 - Professional Practices

Narrative

Somerville High School often engages all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school improvement/growth plan, which reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The identified priorities of the district focus on developing high academic expectations, equity, and social-emotional wellness. The school has a set school improvement plan (SIP) that remains in place for two years. The members of the school improvement council create the plan. The council comprises school committee members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. This committee meets monthly to monitor growth concerning the SIP. The agenda for the committee is published for public viewing and can be found on the school website. The SIP is aligned with the district goals and the NEASC Standards for Accreditation. The SIP drives decision-making in the school by determining priorities for the school year. The SIP also influences the dedication or professional time and resources to ensure progress toward the stated goals. The SIP includes the Highlander Habits in its opening but alignment to these skills is not always evident.

Educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development to improve student learning and well-being. There are three professional development days built into the schedule. Professional development opportunities are facilitated most frequently by district employees, many times peer educators, but also outside institutions are utilized for their educational expertise.Teachers are allowed to work together every Wednesday during their early release days. This time can be used for district goals, teacher collaboration around shared goals or needs, and PLC time. PLCs are aligned to department structures. Teachers collaborate formally, on average, twice monthly; the other Wednesdays are dedicated to district and school initiatives. Teachers and staff universally value this time. The ninth-grade and tenth-grade experience teams and the multilingual education (MLE) educators meet twice weekly to discuss student progress and share intervention ideas. Roughly seventy percent of teachers stated they collaborate with colleagues quite a bit or more. However, peer observation is not a common practice at the school, despite many teachers being interested in the practice. The school has an established evaluation system that requires educators to set school-wide and personal goals and track progress toward these goals during the year. The building is conducive to formal and informal collaboration as there are numerous spaces for teachers to meet and work together, and a high level of informal collaboration occurs throughout the school day.

Educators consistently examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services. Each department reviews student achievement data from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)to inform some changes to instruction and assessment. An informal review of assessment and achievement data is done within individual departments. Common assessments occur within most departments but not all. Departments are adopting performance-based assessments across the school. The school provided professional development on the creation of these assessments for educators. These assessments are viewed as a way better to understand future student attainment of the Highlander Habits. School-wide rubrics have been developed to assist teachers in developing greater consistency in grading practices.The school improvement plan focuses on collecting data on social-emotional well-being and the overall wellness of students. This is done through Google Form surveys conducted during X-block. Community teams are viewed as a valuable resource to support students, and teachers desire expanded access to these teams. These teams meet regularly and review student performance and other data to identify students needing intervention support.

At Somerville High School, collaborative structures and processes consistently support the coordination and implementation of the curriculum. The six-year curriculum review cycle ensures that the curriculum is continuously reviewed. This review cycle analyzes vertical articulation within departments across grade levels. The school has a calendar for each department that delineates what stage of the cycle they are on in the process. Performance-based assessments are integrated and valued throughout the school. These assessments are being added to the curriculum across departments. The SHS Guide to Designing Performance-Based Assessments guides teachers in implementing different classroom assessment practices. This guide integrates the Highlander Habits to ensure that these skills are incorporated into the performance-based assessments. The district and school provide teachers and staff time to create, review, and revise curricula in their departments. Teachers regularly use the early release time to align shared classes for common learning outcomes, lessons,

and assessments. Department leaders work with their departments to ensure that curriculum is implemented in their classrooms, and teachers use collaborative time to revise and develop curricula. Each department has a department head who directly supervises and supports the teachers in that department. These department heads are also members of the school leadership for the building.

Many school-wide organizational practices at Somerville High School are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. The school offers over one hundred different and diverse electives and over fifty different clubs and organizations. The CTE program offers fourteen career pathways: nursing, HVAC, electrical, dental hygienist, plumbing, and construction. Students, parents, and faculty all feel the school provides excellent opportunities for students to pursue their passions and interests. The school continues to strive to offer rigorous and challenging academic programs to all its students, and the open honors program is a direct result of this core belief. The open honors program allows students to decide within a course if they will take it at the honors or college preparatory level. This program has allowed more students to benefit from honors-level coursework without changing classes. This program has also increased the degree of heterogeneous courses in the school, with students of varied academic abilities in the same classroom instead of leveled classes. The school utilizes a community model to identify and meet all student needs. The school has four communities, each with its own assistant principal and related staff. These are also where the community teams reside, providing another support layer to meet students' needs.

Educators at Somerville High School develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning across the school. The CTE program is extensively involved in the community, whether placing students in internships or helping the community with its specific needs. The school has multiple programs that invite the community into the building so students can get authentic learning opportunities. Community members are invited to the student-run beauty salon, automotive lab, restaurant, child-care center, etc. These programs have been impacted by the move to the new building and the pandemic, but they will be incorporated into the school culture once again. Additionally, community members utilize the school at night, as some of the incredible CTE lab spaces are opened up for the benefit of all the citizens of Somerville. The school also has a strong partnership with the local colleges in the community. The school has relied on some of the esteemed educational institutions in greater Boston to provide professional development to their teachers and be research partners. Students can take advanced courses at SHS, many connected to earning college credit. The school uses multiple methods to engage families with communication, including mailings and online materials. The school is also deliberate in always ensuring that materials are available in various languages due to the diversity of the school community. The school is also utilized for multiple community events and more necessary services, such as medical and dental services, which allows for communication with even more families in the school community.

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- NEASC survey
- school board
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 4 - Learning Support

Narrative

Students often receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. The school is divided into community teams, each with one to two school counselors. Additional support layers are provided for newcomer students who transfer into the district. The school shares information about support services with families continually during the year and does so in multiple languages. There is a formal, defined process to identify, refer, and support students who need additional assistance employed by the community teams. The teams review data of all types to determine students needing intervention. Staff can also submit referrals to these teams for students requiring additional interventions. Staff reported that there could be inconsistencies between the community teams since they are made up of different staff. There is also no formal process by which the community teams communicate with each other regularly, as observed. These issues can cause discrepancies in best practices between the community teams or how students are selected for intervention. The Tier 1 guide to supporting students, which offers a range of instructional strategies for use at the classroom level, is shared with all faculty as a roadmap to identifying and supporting students.Teachers are provided time within the school day to meet with grade-level colleagues or focus on monitoring Tier 1 interventions.There are regular community meetings where strategies and best practices for interventions are discussed. These meetings occur weekly in each of the communities. Students have access to various in-school support programs and referrals to community resources. The school has numerous partnerships with community health partners and recourses for students.

All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. The school counseling department is well-staffed and includes a director and seven school counselors with a caseload of 180 to 220 students. Students are assigned a school counselor in the ninth grade who works with the student on course selection, graduation planning, college/career planning, social/emotional needs, crisis support, and referrals to appropriate resources. Counselors meet one-on-one with every student on their caseload at least once yearly.In addition, the counseling department includes a district-wide college and career readiness director, a college and career counselor, two college and career academic advisors, four adjustment counselors, a social worker/teacher, a registrar, an academic tutor, attendance officers, licensed social workers, an LGBTQIA counselor, and a substance use prevention counselor. The school also partners with various community organizations to assist students in need. Students begin working with a college and career readinesscounselor in their junior year to develop an individualized post-secondary plan.

All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. The school employstwo full-time registered nurses, with additional support from the director of school health services and the school nurse manager. The school physician and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regional school nurse consultant are available as needed for consultation. The nursing staff provides health-related preventative and direct intervention services as mandated by the state. These include screenings and educational materials for students. Comprehensive plans for students experiencing challenges in their homes, infectious disease prevention and education, immunization tasks, development of individual health care plans, concussion protocols, and many other medical and social-emotional needs are addressed by the nursing staff. The office consistently keeps regular data and statistics of all office visits. The nursing staff has also dealt with unforeseen challenges due to the pandemic. The health professionals responded to an unexpected and historic increase in immigrants and refugees attending Somerville High School, including unaccompanied minors and students with limited or interrupted formal education. These students often arrive at school without medical records and recent access to medical care, which increases the need for case management and assistance provided by the school nursing staff.

All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel. The library media center's mission is to "develop and support critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and effective consumers and creators of information." The school has one full-time certified library/media specialist, one full-time library/maker space aide, and one part-time library aide who supports implementing the school's curriculum and instructional practices. Student and staff input is used to develop programming for the library media center. New materials and collection development requests are made through

Google Forms and informal practices.The library media center is available to students daily before and after school.Students may use the library media center with permission during a free period or with a class during school hours. Students can individually access the library maker space with a class or outside the school day. Students can receive assistance with research, reference tools, database support, exploring independent interest(s), technology help, e-book/e-audio support, information accessibility, translation tools, and multilingual information. The library media center and maker space website provide students with information on skills and happenings in the space. The maker space is a recent addition to the library media center and is equipped with various tools that classroom teachers and individual students can use for workshops and classes. The library media center is a beautiful physical space, but itscentral location and incorporation with a hallway create limited access to quiet study spaces for students.

Identified English Language Learners and students with special needs and 504 plans receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel across the school. All identified English Language Learners and students on individualized plans due to identified disabilities or needs receive appropriate programs and services in line with state guidance that supports their learning. Leveled services for multilingual students are offered based on the student's prior school experiences, level of English language development, interest areas, and future goals. The school provides multiple avenues of support through school staff and community partnerships and works with students to explore the best path to a high school diploma. For five years or less, students in the United States belong to the Elm Community (one of the community teams), which has sustained cultural and linguistic support. A department chair, IEP team leaders, and special education teachers staff the special education department. Additionally, the school employs a reading specialist, a transition special education teacher, paraprofessionals, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, school adjustment counselors, a physical therapist, and an occupational therapist. Students are placed in the least restrictive environment. When appropriate, a co-teaching model for special education services in core classes is provided. Students who need additional therapeutic, life skills, and transition/post-secondary support benefit from programs embedded within the academic and vocational programs within the school. Common planning time is provided when possible, but scheduling can be challenging for all department members.

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- NEASC survey
- school leadership
- school support staff
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Standard 5 - Learning Resources

Narrative

The community and district provide buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services. The new Somerville High School opened in the fall of 2021. The new campus offers a state-of-the-art, innovative, and nurturing learning environment for students, staff, and the community. The building features many appropriate, well-designed spaces supporting student learning and curriculum delivery. The school contains multiple specialized learning spaces for each career and technical education program, 12 science labs, three art rooms, three music rooms, a multilevel media center, a fully renovated gymnasium, a collegiate-style lecture hall, and outdoor learning and dining. The school was outfitted with modern technology resources throughout the building during construction. The building is adequately sized to house its population of 1,300 students and is clean and well-maintained. The infrastructure meets all applicable federal and state laws and complies with local fire, health, and safety regulations. Classrooms support the diversity of the student body by providing various spaces configured around a student-centered learning experience. These spaces include new outdoor instruction areas and large-group facilities to support a stronger connection to the school community and authentic learning. An open-air courtyard with plantings, chalkboards, and seating provides space for education or social gatherings and a safe outdoor environment for all students. The building's entrances are always locked during the school day for security, and access to the building is by keycard only. Visitors enter through the front doors after being buzzed in by either a community engagement specialist at the front desk or a staff member of the main office. Five community engagement specialists support students and their safety throughout the day. Staff and students are required to have district-issued picture identification at all times in the building.

The school/district provides time and financial resources to enable researched-based instruction, professional growth, and the development, implementation, and improvement of school programs and services. The schedule allows weekly opportunities for the department, grade-level professional learning communities, and professional development. Within these designated times, the ninth-grade experience team, tenth-grade experience team, and newcomer education success team meet weekly to collaborate and discuss student needs. The PLC agendas are determined by each department's needs and goals at the department head's discretion. This time is also utilized by departments to review, revise, and create curriculum documents. A schedule of three designated professional development days offers educators opportunities for training and professional growth, along with many summer opportunities for professional development.Community teams of assistant principals, deans, school counselors, administrative assistants, and other support staff meet weekly to collaborate and discuss student needs based on metrics such as attendance rates, tardies, grades, and social-emotional needs.

The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable funding to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Central office administrators and school committee members in Somerville strongly support the educational opportunities provided to students. There is a wide range of in-school programming and services, including special education and multilingual learner education programs. The CTE program at the school offers fourteen state-approved vocational programs and serves more than fifty percent of the student body. Many specialized programs are offered, including work-based learning, the RISE program to support struggling students, and the early college initiative. Somerville High School has a wide range of course offerings, including nineteen advanced placement courses across all academic departments and over one hundred elective course offerings. A few examples of these elective courses include Advanced Drum Line and Yoga. The world language department offers five different languages to students. The school has sufficient professional and support staff to ensure appropriate class sizes and teacher-to-student ratios. The school works diligently to limit most classes to twenty students, although some exceptions exist. The district provides a library/media center with a maker space. The school also has a fabrication space focused on education, design, and entrepreneurship. This "fab lab" is open to the public after school hours. The district has provided all students with a Chromebook and teachers with laptops for professional use. There are interactive projectors in each designated instructional space, and a replacement plan is already in place as these devices age. There are four computer labs for instructional needs that Chromebooks can not adequately address. There is a language lab, a drafting lab, a business lab, and a math/computer science lab. The building was constructed with Wi-Fi throughout to support student learning. The district

technology department is housed in the high school, with several staff members dedicated to providing daily service to the high school.

The school/district has short-term and long-term plans to address its building and facilities' capital and maintenance needs across the school. The school is a brand new, state-of-the-art building that opened in 2021. The city's public works department manages the maintenance and repair of the building. A building manager is housed at the high school to handle maintenance needs as the building begins its life. The public works department can address any needs outside of the abilities of the in-house manager. There is a schedule for quarterly preventive maintenance and repair of the building. There is a system for staff members to report building issues and for them to be addressed. The school can also use the "211" city system to report building issues.As a brand-new school building, no capital improvements are planned for the immediate future. The final phase of the new building construction, an exterior area behind the building, is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

Somerville High School has infrastructure and protocols in place to ensure effective responses in crisis situations across the school.All students must enter through the main entrance and present their IDs when entering. The school utilized a student management system that checks students into the building using their physical ID or a copy of their ID on a smartphone. Visitors must use a video buzzer system to gain access to the building. Visitors are escorted to their destination once inside the building. Five community engagement specialists and a supervisor assist in monitoring the building and doors starting at 7:00 am and during the school day. One specialist is stationed in the main office after school until 6:00 pm. Students can utilize the front courtyard during lunch, supervised by a staff member.Security cameras are located both inside and outside of the building. This system will soon also notify school administration and security personnel if select exterior doors are opened during the school day.The emergency response plan outlines the protocols that ensure the safety of students, staff, and visitors in an emergency. The emergency response plan outlines the various teams' functions in a crisis. The district and the school have positive working relationships with emergency services personnel in the city. In addition, school administrators and select school staff have two-way radios that allow for immediate communication. These can communicate directly with the Somerville Police Department and the Somerville Fire Department as needed.The school also utilizes a mental health safety assessment protocol for an additional layer of safety. The school's crisis team oversees various emergencies and serves as a support network for students and staff during a traumatic event. All staff members are assigned an emergency assignment in the event of a building emergency.

Sources of Evidence
- central office personnel
- department leaders
- facility tour
- NEASC survey
- school board
- school leadership
- self-reflection
- students
- teachers

Priority Areas

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school with a modification in language to better align to the NEASC Standards for Accreditation.

Priority Area #1 Goal Statement: The school will develop and implement intervention strategies to increase class and daily attendance to take collective responsibility for all students to show how each is known, valued, and connected to the school community while also developing a method to collect data to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions to show an increase in students. (1.2a, 1.3, 4.1)

School Response - Relative to Foundational Element 1.2a, the Highlander Habits, which make up the vision of the graduate, include a "responsibility" section, under which it states the expectation that students will be "reliable, punctual, and professional." Under Foundational Element 4.1a, collecting such data is part of identifying intervention strategies. Also, the tier 1 guide for supporting students systematizes concerns related to attendance, behavior, academics, and social/emotional issues. Under Standard 3, Principle 3, this is part of the data SHS analyzes to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.

Visiting Team Response - During the debrief and in meetings with the steering committee at the school, the visiting team initially suggested that this Priority Area be removed to allow the school to focus more deeply on the other identified priorities. The visiting team also believes this would be a focus for the school in the coming year, even if it is not a stated Priority Area. The school explains that this is a major concern among the faculty and believes it is important to demonstrate responsiveness to their concerns during this process. The school also states in its rationale in the self-study that this is directly linked to the Highlander Habit of Responsibility, a focus at the school this year. Due to that explanation and a modification to one of the other Priority Areas, the team and school collaboratively agreed for this to remain a Priority Area. It is also important to the school that this is listed as the first of the Priority Areas to demonstrate the emphasis placed on this by the school leaders.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school

Priority Area #2 Goal Statement: Ensure implementation across the school of agreed-upon school-wide common practices, especially those contained in the Somerville High School Tier-1 Guide, so that all students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. (1.3, 4.1)

School Response - The tier 1 guide systematizes concerns related to attendance, behavior, academics, and social/emotional issues and is the first step toward helping students achieve the school's vision of the graduate. Under Foundational Element 4.1a, all educators must consistently follow this resource in order to put proper interventions in place for students who need them. Also, consistent application of the tier 1 guide strongly connects with Principle 1.3 because there is the expectation of collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student.

Visiting Team Response - The visiting team is in agreement with this goal. The school should be commended for creating the Tier 1 guide to address interventions for all students in their classrooms. They are aware that there is inconsistency in implementation across the school, which is to be expected at the commencement of any initiative. The school is working to create coherence around these strategies to ensure that all students receive strong Tier 1 instructional strategies in order to maximize their success.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team concurs with the Priority Area identified by the school

Priority Area #3 Goal Statement: Develop and implement strategies and programs to increase the number of students who are part of authentic real-world and work-based learning, with a particular focus on students from identified underrepresented groups at the school. (1.7, 2.5)

School Response - Principle 1.5 promotes, in part, professional growth for educators and students. When students expand their learning beyond the walls of the school building and work in authentic environments, they begin a path to professional growth that can inform them for a lifetime. Under Principle 1.7, work-based learning and coops encourage agency and upstanding behavior as well as learning experiences that connect to or make an impact on the community beyond the school campus.

Visiting Team Response - The visiting team agrees with this Priority Area for the school. The school has a robust offering of opportunities for students but sees room to engage even more students in these options. Over fifty percent of the student body is enrolled in one of the fourteen CTE programs at the school. This is also where most students are taking part in these opportunities. The school is committed to expanding these authentic and real-world learning opportunities across the school.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team recommends a modification to the Priority Area as identified by the school to include language from the schools suggested Priority Area #5 as stated in their Self-Reflection Report in order to merge these two goals.

Priority Area #4 Goal Statement: Develop a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices, with a particular focus on incorporating the Highlander Habits into the school culture. (2.2a)

School Response - In terms of Foundational Element 2.2a, each course does have a curriculum, but it is not in a consistent format across all departments. Also, completing this work is imperative in order to address Principles 2.2 and 2.3.

Visiting Team Response - The visiting team agrees with this Priority Area. The school has a written curriculum for most courses. The school also has a revision cycle for the written curriculum overseen by the district. In discussion and collaboration with the school, the visiting team felt their identified Priority Area #5 could be incorporated into this goal. The school is committed to developing a curriculum and, in that work, can also ensure that the Highlander Habits are embedded into the curriculum. This will help ensure these skills become a part of the school culture.

Priority Area

The Collaborative Conference visiting team recommends a modification to the Priority Area identified by the school.

Priority Area #5 Goal Statement: See Priority Area #4

School Response - For Principle 1.2, expanding the work surrounding the Highlander Habits will fully ensure the core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate is actively reflected in the school culture and drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom. Under Principle 2.1, it will provide time to create a formal process to assess and communicate individual learner progress. Lastly, engaging all stakeholders will satisfy Principle 3.1.

Visiting Team Response - In discussion and collaboration with the school, the visiting team decided that the school's stated Priority Area #5 should be incorporated into Priority Area #4. The visiting team sees a connection between the work to fully develop and revise the school's curriculum and incorporating the Highlander Habits into all aspects of the school culture. While not entirely the same, the visiting team believes that adding a fifth priority area, similar to another one, could divide focus and professional resources for the school. The visiting team is confident that the school can use the focus of Priority Area #4 to accomplish the stated goal of Priority Area #5 in their self-reflection report.

Commendations

Commendation
- The state-of-the-art facility that Somerville has constructed for the students, staff, and community
- The inclusive culture based on the celebration of diversity created and promoted by the students and staff
- The intense feeling of belonging and support to the school community expressed by the students

Commendation
- The inclusive process used to create the Highlander Habits and vision of the graduate
- The process used by the school to analyze the Highlander Habits through an equity lens and the resulting revisions
- The peer mentoring program that assists students in resolving conflicts and supports emotional growth at the school
- The dedicated professional time supported by the school and district for teachers to engage in professional learning
- The partnerships with outside both higher education institutions and organizations that support professional learning
- The support and trust placed in school leaders by the district and school committee

Commendation
- The scope and variety of electives offered to students to pursue their passions and interests
- The open honors program that supports high expectations for all students
- The inclusion of real-world connections and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging principles into the written curriculum
- The curriculum review process supported by the district to ensure continual reflection and revision of the curriculum

Commendation
- The early release days provided to teachers by the district to support professional learning
- The alignment of the school improvement plan with established district goals to create coherence across the school and district
- The SHS School Improvement Council involves all stakeholders in creating and monitoring the adoption of the school improvement plan
- The grade-level teams that promote interdisciplinary discussions of academic and social-emotional interventions

Commendation
- The comprehensive school counseling and support model that is provided to students by professionally trained and certified staff
- The extensive community partnerships that provide additional support and opportunities for students
- The resources and support provided to students and families who are recent immigrants to the United States and have a variety of unique needs
- The community structure used at the school to replicate the support and focus on the individual needs of students of a smaller school

Commendation

- The expansive technology resources provided to students, including one-to-one devices, state-of-the-art CTE labs, the fab lab, and the library maker space
- The policies, procedures, protocols, and resources used to ensure a safe environment for students and staff
- The dedication of the school committee and district, as demonstrated through the resources provided to support the students

Recommendations

Recommendation

Expand the open honors program and develop similar opportunities to support high academic expectations and access to rigorous courses for all students, with a focus on providing educators with the professional learning

Recommendation

Ensure that all students experience engaging, authentic, real-world learning and assessment within all classrooms across the school

Recommendation

Develop and implement strategies to expand opportunities for common planning time during the school day for teachers and staff while continuing to meet the needs of students

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

The Commission expects school officials to use the results of the Collaborative Conference Report as well as the school's identified Priority Areas for Growth to draft a school improvement/growth plan, and to review and implement the findings of the Self-Reflection and and Collaborative Conference Report. An outline of the next steps in the Accreditation process is included in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which is available on the Commission's website.

A school's initial/continued Accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing the school's improvement/growth plan based on the Priority Areas validated by the visiting team and recommendations identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. The school will complete a Summary Report and host a Decennial Accreditation visiting team two years after the Collaborative Conference to show progress implementing the school's Priority Areas. The Decennial visiting team will identify recommended next steps as well as additional recommendations for the school to continue to align with the Standards for Accreditation and to improve outcomes for students.

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Carl Johnson - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

Assistant Chair: Ms. Kelley St. Coeur - Ashland High School

Team Members

Elizabeth D'Amico - Lynn English High School

Gail Farrington - Mansfield High School

Mr. Jeffrey Lizotte - Oakmont Regional High School