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

Commission on Public Schools

Commission on Public Schools

Report of the Visiting Team for
Somerville High School

Somerville, MA

04-13-2025 - 04-16-2025

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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 $126,619, and the per capita income is $69,905. The poverty level is 9.5 percent.

The 2023 census indicates that of those over twenty-five, 91.4 percent have a high school diploma or higher, and 69.9 percent have 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 2023-2024, these schools served 4,927 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 path.

In the 2023-2024 school year, district enrollment by race/ethnicity stood at 8.3 percent African-American, 5.9 percent Asian, 40.4 percent Hispanic, 0.1 percent Native American, 38.8 percent white, 0.2 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 6.2 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic. The percentage of the school's student population speaking a first language other than English is 56.4 percent. 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 students and staff alike look forward to.

Somerville High School regularly celebrates its students, including 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 century-long tradition called Class Day, where seniors may choose to have their proudest accomplishment read aloud, takes place the week before graduation.

The per-pupil cost for FY22 was $24,768, which is above the state average. The budget for SY22 was $115,507,434. The City of Somerville is generous with its budget, particularly in terms of meeting targeted needs for students and staff.

The dropout rate for SY22 increased to 2 percent from 1.1 percent in SY21. Seventy-four percent of students from the class of 2021 went on to pursue either two—or four-year degrees, with another 4 percent electing some other type of post-secondary training program. Two percent planned to enter the military. Fourteen percent stated that they would 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

School Improvement/Growth Plan

The school improvement/growth plan is not attached.

Related Files

- [2025_01_22-08_37_Copy of Somerville High School School Improvement Plan SY25-SY27.pdf](#)

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 that 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); and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

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

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

Accreditation coordinators and a steering committee composed of professional staff were appointed to supervise the school's Accreditation process, which includes the self-reflection, the Collaborative Conference visit, the development and implementation of a growth plan, and the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

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

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Team

A visiting team of seven members was assigned by the Commission on Public Schools to conduct a Decennial Accreditation visit to Somerville High School in Somerville, Massachusetts. The visiting team members spent three days conducting a visit to the school; reviewed the self-reflection, Collaborative Conference report, and Decennial Summary Report documents; met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students, and parents; and visited classes to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee on Public Secondary Schools' and Public Elementary and Middle Schools' Standards for Accreditation and the degree to which the school is making progress toward their identified priority areas for growth as indicated in the school's improvement/growth plan.

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each

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

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

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

Somerville High School provides a socially and emotionally safe environment for students and adults. Before the Collaborative Conference, over 71 percent of students reported feeling safe and welcome at the school, and this level of safety has likely increased. The school's counseling and social work teams offer comprehensive support services, including mental health and risk assessments. The annual Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) administration enables the school to monitor adolescent health trends and develop responsive programming. The school has implemented a range of targeted support programs that contribute to a safe and inclusive environment, including the RISE program for students without IEPs who face engagement challenges, the Bridge therapeutic classroom for students with complex academic and social-emotional needs, and the ELM (newcomer) community for multilingual support. Weekly Student Support Team (SST) and community team meetings develop individualized intervention plans and address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional concerns. The Tier 1 Intervention Guide equips staff with strategies to address various student needs. Emotional safety is further supported through weekly restorative justice circles during advisory time and a nationally recognized student-led mediation program. These combined efforts reflect a strong commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive school climate.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

Somerville High School has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. With the support of grant funding, the school completed a multi-year initiative reviewing the school mission and priority focus areas. Faculty members, administrators, students, and community members were all included in the process that resulted in the Someville High School Vision Statement and the Highlander Habits (vision of the graduate). The school has continually revised the rubrics used to assess the habits with an equity lens. For example, the Habit of professionalism was revised to become responsibility, which, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, has included a student self-reflection and counts for ten percent of all quarterly grades within the courses in which they are assessed. While all of the Highlander Habits are evident in parts of the school community, they are not currently formally evaluated, and visuals in all spaces would be a positive addition.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

The school does not yet have written curriculum documents for all courses that include a scope and sequence or curriculum map with units of study that contain expected course outcomes for each student, guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, formative assessments, assessments aligned with expected course outcomes, instructional strategies, and connections to the school's vision of the graduate. Grade-level teams and professional learning communities (PLCs) follow a modified Understanding by Design (UbD) unit planning template, using essential questions and concepts to guide skills and content. The process of updating this curriculum includes audits in all courses and focused professional development to develop the curriculum in the new format. These standardized unit plans include department-based instructional strategies, common assessments with at least one project-based experience per unit, and embedded Highlander Habits. Several departments are in the first steps of the review process, while others have not begun the formal curriculum review. It is the expectation that curriculum documents will be updated to a newer format as the review process continues.

Rating
Does Not Meet the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

Somerville High School has a current school improvement plan that reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and the Highlander Habits. The plan is reflective of the Priority Areas for improvement identified by the school. The school's vision for its graduates (Highlander Habits) is realized through its school improvement plan (SIP), designed and implemented by the school improvement council (SIC). This council includes administrators, parents, teachers/counselors, school committee members, and students, and meets monthly. The SIP, covering school years 2025-2027, is aligned with the district improvement plan (DIP) and prioritizes equitable practices to inform school-wide decision-making.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.6a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.6a

All career and technical education (CTE) programs at Somerville High School have a program advisory committee and implement a systematic program review process. Somerville's fourteen CTE programs are guided by diverse advisory committees, including program-specific and a general board. Comprised of representatives from various sectors, these committees ensure programs reflect community needs and job market trends. Meeting twice yearly, they advise on program planning, operation, and evaluation for individual programs and the overall CTE department.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

Somerville High School has intervention strategies designed to support learners. The school offers comprehensive intervention support, including focused reading and math skills courses, academic and social-emotional support classes, and specialized programs. The RISE program aids students without individualized education plans/programs with engagement challenges, while the Bridge therapeutic classroom supports students with complex academic and social-emotional needs, including post-hospitalization transitions. The ELM (newcomer) community provides multilingual support for recently immigrated students (years one through three). Weekly student support team (SST) meetings, facilitated by administrators, counselors, and nurses, develop individualized intervention plans based on faculty referrals. The Tier 1 intervention guide supports teachers and counselors in addressing academic, attendance, discipline, and social-emotional needs. Weekly community team meetings further address student academic, social-emotional, and behavioral struggles.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

The Somerville High School site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The school boasts a clean, well-maintained building that adheres to all federal, state, and local regulations. The school provides students with modern facilities, including a cutting-edge TV/media classroom, a newly renovated gymnasium with the addition of a track, yoga/dance studio, and fitness room, a lecture hall, fully equipped science labs, music and art studios, an auditorium with live-streaming capabilities, a robotics lab, and other dedicated spaces for co-curricular activities. While the library media center serves the needs of many, its open layout presents some challenges, and repurposing of other spaces has limited some of the original intended use of the space. It's noted that private, confidential meeting spaces are limited. The cafeteria adequately accommodates all students, and alternative eating areas are available. Maintenance and repair requests are efficiently managed through the city's 311 system. The school's recently completed grounds, featuring a new turf field, are now fully utilized.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.5a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.5a

Somerville High School provides a physically safe environment for students and adults. The school ensures safety through controlled access, requiring student and staff ID entry and visitor screening. Building access is monitored by security cameras. Community engagement specialists monitor activity in the hallways and help redirect students. Staff use a key card system to access the building. Staff safety training, covering emergency response, security protocols, and specialized systems, happens on a yearly basis. Regular drills are conducted with police and fire departments to prepare for emergencies. Individualized safety plans and a student-led mediation program, which is nationally recognized, are among the options used to address specific student needs.

Rating
Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements Ratings

Foundational Element Ratings

Foundational Elements	Collaborative Conference School's Rating	Collaborative Conference Visitors' Rating	Decennial School's Rating	Decennial Visitors' Rating
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
1.2a - Learning Culture	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
2.2a - Student Learning	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
3.6 - Professional Practices	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
5.5a - Learning Resources	NA	NA	Meets	Meets

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

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)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Somerville High School has developed and implemented several intervention strategies to increase class and daily attendance. The principal, associate principal, assistant principals, and deans collaboratively worked on an attendance dashboard focusing on daily and class attendance data. Deans are the primary attendance monitors, making daily attendance calls beginning at 8:30 a.m. A computer-generated call goes out at 9:30 a.m. The daily calls have produced positive results. Rather than waiting for the daily calls, more families are calling ahead to notify the community teams of tardiness or absence. Families are now asking for help with student attendance issues. Assistant principals and deans meet with two district-wide attendance officers weekly. At the end of the school year, the assistant principals and deans meet with counselors from the K-8 schools to identify incoming ninth graders with attendance issues. As a result of the focus on daily attendance, there has been improved engagement in school, resulting in a modest drop in class cuts and increased participation in after-school activities.

Somerville High School developed and implemented attendance success plans three years ago and has continued improving its model. These plans range from broad to specific, focusing on daily and class attendance. The student and parent/guardian sign the plan. The implementation of attendance policy, as well as attendance success plans, is helping students earn the grade they achieved in a class due to improved attendance (as opposed to earning a grade of 59 due to excessive unexcused class absences). Teachers and counselors do not always receive a copy of a student's attendance success plan.

Somerville High School is working with consultants from Boston Children's Hospital centered around the use of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) to audit the student supports the school has in place, how students access them, how long students stay in the supports, and the exit criteria from those supports. The school is most interested in using the supports effectively to impact students' attendance and sense of belonging. Currently, the consultants are keeping notes, and a report will be shared with the school at the end of the year.

The school's focused and collaborative efforts to improve attendance have resulted in measurable gains in student engagement, stronger communication with families, and a more proactive approach to intervention. With real-time data and community-based support, the development and refinement of attendance success plans demonstrates a growing culture of shared responsibility and responsiveness. As the school continues to strengthen its systems, particularly through improved communication of plans with all stakeholders and expanded partnerships like the collaboration with Boston Children's Hospital, the school is well-positioned for continued growth. Further work and focus on this priority area will support improved attendance outcomes and foster a stronger sense of belonging and connection for all students.

Recommended Next Steps
- Increase the number of student and parent/guardian meetings regarding attendance concerns and educate families regarding the importance of regular school attendance
- Revamp community meetings so that there are dedicated dates for reviewing specific data for attendance, behavior, and/or grades

- Provide professional development for staff when implementing the new data dashboard, Open Architects
- Recognize positive strides in students' attendance, potential examples include: perfect attendance awards, Highlander of the Quarter, and the "earn back incentive"
- Consistently share individual student attendance success and intervention plans with teachers and counselors
- Formally compare data regarding daily and class attendance from year to year and quarter to quarter, and share with stakeholders
- Gather and share data that supports improved school engagement, i.e., participation in after-school activities

Sources of Evidence
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- teachers

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

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)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Somerville High School has a comprehensive Tier 1 guide that gives teachers a clear road map for whom to contact and how to proceed when supporting students with attendance, class avoidance, behavior, academics, and social-emotional concerns. Each of these concerns is broken down further into specific infractions. The Tier 1 guide contains links to the overall Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) visual graphic, the conflict resolution steps guide, MTSS and learning support services, Tier 1 academic intervention strategies, and student referral forms, among other helpful links. The guide was generated by a collaborative group of teachers, counselors, deans, and administrators. Faculty members feel included in the process and can provide feedback. This guide continues to be reviewed, revised, and updated.

A clear system has been established for what happens once a teacher submits a referral form. The assistant principal and associate principal check weekly for referrals, then complete a thorough review of the student's history. If the APs determine the issue is something the supervisors/department chairs can use common practice guides to help or Tier 1 academic intervention strategies to help, APs will reach out to them. If the APs believe the intervention needs the dean or a counselor, APs will put the student's name on the weekly community meeting agenda to discuss a plan as a team.

The school has implemented a system of observation and feedback to support the consistent use of school-wide common practices. Department chairs use this guide when observing teachers. A common practice checklist is used during classroom observations and provides individualized reports to teachers, highlighting strengths and areas for growth. These reports are differentiated for new and experienced teachers, ensuring that expectations are appropriate and aligned with the school's instructional goals.

The school's common practices guide helps teachers show students they are valued members of the school community. The stated theory of action is that fewer interventions will be needed if teachers universally use the school's agreed-upon common practices. Students are proud of the supportive staff and teachers at Somerville High School. Many teachers find the Tier 1 document helpful, although some feel the guide can be overwhelming.

A revised absence policy now limits a student's quarterly grade to a maximum of 59 if they exceed five unexcused absences in a class, reinforcing the importance of consistent attendance. Additionally, a new hallway placard system was introduced to monitor student movement during class time, aiming to reduce class avoidance and improve accountability. These changes are part of a broader effort to streamline processes and reduce the administrative burden on teachers, allowing them to focus more on instruction and student support. Once per week, teachers are given one hour to work on communication with families and other Tier 1 interventions. The associate principal emails teachers with detailed information regarding effective use of this time, including links and resources.

Evidence of the impact of these efforts includes a significant reduction in physical altercations resulting in out-of-school suspensions, from fifteen incidents in the first semester of the previous school year to five in the current year, with only two occurring during the school day. This decline suggests that the school's emphasis on proactive intervention and consistent expectations is contributing to a safer and more supportive school climate. As the school continues to refine its practices and collect data on these initiatives, it is well-positioned to further reduce absenteeism, improve academic outcomes, and strengthen student engagement.

The school's work in this area has resulted in a more structured and responsive system of support for students, with clearer expectations for staff and more consistent interventions across departments. The implementation of the Tier 1 guide, combined with observation-based feedback and policy refinements, has contributed to a noticeable reduction in student conflicts and improved communication regarding student needs. As the school continues to refine its practices, particularly by streamlining processes, collecting and analyzing full-year data, and supporting new staff in adopting common practices, it is building a stronger foundation for equity and student success. Continued focus on consistency, collaboration, and data-informed decision-making will further enhance the school's ability to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all learners.

Recommended Next Steps

- Increase the consistency of intervention and communication
- Ensure all students receive consistent support and/or consequences for the same issues
- Implement training and professional development on using the data dashboard and Open Architect
- Establish a process to review and revise the Tier 1 guide with a focus on identifying the interventions that are having the greatest impact

Sources of Evidence

- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- students
- teacher interview

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

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)

Action, Impact, and Growth

Somerville High School is piloting the experiential culminating hands-on opportunity (ECHO) for seniors graduating in 2026. The career and technical education (CTE) director and English department head have generated interest among current juniors with good credit standing. Site visits to other districts informed the design of the ECHO program, focus groups with students and families, and feedback from the school committee. The development of the ECHO program reflects a strategic and collaborative effort among school leaders, including the associate principal, English department head, and the program director for community and work-based learning. This long-term vision demonstrates the school's commitment to expanding authentic, real-world learning experiences for all students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

The group who will participate in ECHO will be identified as early as December of 2025, after reviewing first-semester grades. The program is built into the senior English curriculum, and students in the last five weeks of the fourth term will go out into the community for a work-based learning experience for 30 hours per week. The CTE director and English department head will monitor the students' progress for the pilot year. The program is student-driven, and the students are responsible for finding project placements based on their passion. The school has partnered with MassHire to help support students who find it challenging to secure a site.

The ECHO program would replace a student's full schedule in quarter four. To encourage access to the ECHO project, the school will modify the 30-hour commitment to accommodate a student's schedule. Modifications will be offered to students who take AP courses or have required ELL classes, so they do not spend the whole day out of class. The school said they would lower the hourly requirement to as low as five hours to accommodate as many students as possible. These modifications will support the school's goal of reaching underrepresented populations.

The program will be rolled out over four years, including a pilot year in 2025-2026, to allow for a thoughtful evaluation of its effectiveness.

Another step the school has taken to grow in the priority area has been to increase the number of ninth-graders participating in the exploratory program. Over 90 percent of ninth-graders are enrolled in the exploratory class. For the incoming ninth-grade class, 320 out of 326 have requested the exploratory program. CTE teachers indicate that outreach like summer camps, tours of the building, and other open house opportunities have increased interest in rising ninth-graders. To continue interest, career and technical teachers seek opportunities to make their shops competitive and marketable in the post-employment market. For example, the electrical department competes with vocational schools by focusing on niche markets such as solar and wind turbines.

The impact of the increase in ninth-grade participants in exploratory programs has led to an increase in CTE enrollment. The CTE program enrollment numbers have increased by twenty percent this year. Currently, 64 percent of students are enrolled in a vocational program. Teachers have been pleased with the level of mastery being met sooner in the CTE programs. Unfortunately, the increase in enrollment has lowered the co-op placement rate. Teachers are being added to the programs to support the population growth; the electrical teaching staff increased from one to two teachers in 2024-2025, and plumbing is expected to increase from one to two teachers in 2025-2026.

The school focused on reaching underrepresented populations in multiple ways. For example, the school hired a CTE paraprofessional who speaks seven languages. The paraprofessional assists in the CTE program so that all

students have equitable access. Reducing CTE hour requirements for multilingual learners is another way the school ensures equitable access for this underrepresented group.

In addition to the initiatives noted by the visiting team, the development of the ECHO (Experiential Culminating Hands-on Opportunity) program reflects a strategic and collaborative effort among school leaders, including the associate principal, English department head, and the program director for community and work-based learning. The program is designed as a four-year rollout, with full senior participation expected by the 2028–2029 school year. This long-term vision demonstrates the school's commitment to expanding authentic, real-world learning experiences for all students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

The school has also seen a 20 percent increase in CTE co-op participation this year, a notable indicator of growth in work-based learning opportunities. Communication with employer partners, hiring data, and feedback from CTE advisory meetings have all contributed to tracking this progress. Anecdotally, educators report that students are mastering skills more quickly, and students themselves have expressed increased engagement and a sense that the school is invested in their future success.

These steps ensured the program was responsive to community needs and aligned with the school's broader goals. As both ECHO and CTE co-op programs expand, the school anticipates additional staffing to support increased enrollment and ensure equitable access. These efforts are already helping students build social-emotional skills, strengthen self-esteem, and prepare more effectively for post-secondary pathways.

The school's commitment to expanding authentic, real-world learning opportunities has already begun to yield meaningful results. The ECHO program launch and the CTE co-op participation growth reflect a clear shift toward more personalized, career-connected learning experiences. These initiatives increase student engagement while helping students build confidence, develop professional skills, and envision their post-secondary lives. As the school continues to scale these programs and address staffing and access needs, it is well-positioned for further growth. Continued reflection, stakeholder input, and data collection will ensure that these efforts remain responsive and equitable, supporting the school's broader mission of preparing all students for success beyond high school.

Recommended Next Steps
- Develop a system to identify seniors who are eligible and willing to participate in the ECHO program trial
- Develop a curriculum for the ECHO program following the school's other work in this area
- Provide training and advise students who opt to participate in the ECHO program
- Implement Highlander Habit rubrics that already exist and use the vision of the graduate to help build the curriculum and standards for the ECHO program

Sources of Evidence
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- facility tour
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school summary report
- teachers

Priority Area 4

Priority Area

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 fully incorporating the Highlander Habits into all aspects of the school culture. (2.2a, 2.2, 2.3)

Action, Impact, and Growth

The district developed a common curriculum template, and through a teacher-driven process, departments began to write curriculum. However, the curriculum has yet to be written in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. Teachers write the curriculum for each subject area in conjunction with department heads and coaches, where applicable. The curriculum undergoes a review in a cycle, but has been sporadically updated, and different content areas have undergone reviews at different times. Not all areas have gone through the curriculum cycle yet. This curriculum cycle began in earnest in 2022 with common district map templates.

Since the Collaborative Conference, efforts to standardize curriculum map writing have begun. The English department has undergone a thorough curriculum review, taking feedback from stakeholders to change and improve the curriculum. Social studies has also undergone the review cycle and is in implementation; however, not all curriculum maps are complete for all classes within the department.

Teachers in departments without coaches or who teach singleton courses lack the time to dedicate to writing curriculum. Funding for summer curriculum work available in previous years was taken out of the budget for the summer of 2024. Teachers lack the time, stakeholder input, and resources to complete their maps. Although t eachers want to complete curriculum writing, they sometimes lack the required direction, structure, and time.

Departments are staggered throughout the curriculum review process and the purchase of updated curriculum materials. While this is a work in progress, steps have been taken to create a plan for reviewing and implementing a consistent curriculum across the school in all departments. The multilingual learner (MLL) department began its first study year in the spring of 2025, so they will be developing their department-specific profiles and visions, and auditing their current curriculum. World language is in its "implementing" phase, and the middle school grades are engaged with a consultant to align their curriculum with the high school vertically. When the State releases new standards and frameworks, departments like health, physical education, and science have spent time in their department meetings to understand and integrate the new standards into their curriculum.

Although the school has taken various steps to develop curriculum maps, departments vary in addressing essential questions, common assessments, and state standards. Teachers and department heads acknowledge that the curriculum review process has experienced setbacks, such as department turnover and funding for curriculum alignment leaders.

There are no clear indications of how common rubrics are currently implemented. Further work is needed to ensure consistent application of the Highlander Habits (vision of a graduate) across all curriculum maps and units in every department.The ECHO project will incorporate the school-wide responsibility rubric, but that will be determined and outlined in the coming months as the school prepares for its pilot year.

As a result of the curriculum review and the expansion of open honors classes in science, history, math and world language, Somerville High School has seen an increase in the number of students moving from college prep to honors, an increase in the number of students taking and passing advanced placement courses and a specific increase in the number of economically disadvantaged students participating in advanced coursework. Common planning around curriculum mapping led to various world languages being taught on a thematic level, leading to proficiency-based assessment, benefiting student learning outcomes.

The school's work in this area reflects a commitment to equity, coherence, and academic rigor through curriculum development. While the process of aligning all departments to a consistent curriculum format is ongoing, the progress made, particularly in departments like English, social studies, and world languages, demonstrates a clear trajectory of growth. The integration of Highlander Habits into curriculum planning, along with increased access to advanced coursework, is already expanding opportunities for students and improving learning outcomes. As the school continues to streamline its curriculum review cycle and build capacity across departments, it is poised to create a more unified and inclusive academic experience that supports all learners in achieving the school's vision of the graduate.

Recommended Next Steps

- Determine and implement ways to streamline the curriculum review process and timeline
- Prioritize completing the curriculum documents to ensure equitable and shared learning experiences for all students, ensuring all units of study include guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, and integrate the school's vision of the graduate (Highlander Habits)
- Involve each department and each grade-level team in creating horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment across content areas to the extent feasible
- Create a shared communication system for all curriculum maps across all content areas for staff access

Sources of Evidence

- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- student work
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

Instruction at Somerville High School is intentionally designed to support the academic, social, and cultural needs of a diverse student population. Teachers across departments employ strategies that promote differentiation, responsiveness, and student ownership, aligning with the school's common practices and a shared commitment to equity. The schoolwide grading structure (65 percent assessments, 25 percent practice, and 10 percent responsibility) ensures that academic performance and learning behaviors are valued. Across departments, teachers use rubrics and cover sheets to convey learning targets, outline criteria for success, and encourage student reflection. The only consistently used rubric is the responsibility rubric. In ninth-grade English, for example, students use a rubric-aligned cover page to explain how their writing meets learning objectives and demonstrates growth. Instruction is further supported by flexible grouping, co-teaching, and the open honors model, which allows students to pursue honors-level work with support. This model also enables real-time adjustments to practice, allowing teachers to meet the diverse needs of learners in the open honors classes. The Tier 1 guide provides structured classroom intervention strategies, and programs like CTE and the newcomers department offer differentiated, hands-on learning environments. The rigor and engagement analysis tool encourages staff to design cognitively demanding and relevant tasks, ensuring that all students are both challenged and supported meaningfully. Differentiation is evident in both curriculum and instructional delivery. For example, in multilingual learner education (MLE) classrooms, students engage in personal narrative writing with support from graphic organizers, vocabulary routines, sentence frames, and two-column notes, providing multiple entry points into literacy tasks. These scaffolds help students connect language development with cultural identity, ensuring access to the content.

Students are frequently given opportunities to take ownership of their learning through meaningful and self-directed experiences. In CTE carpentry, students participate in a capstone senior project in which they choose endeavors of personal significance to design and construct. Some students build a manicure table or a doghouse, reflecting how their learning extended beyond the classroom to bring their work to families and communities. Student goal setting and reflection are supported through the responsibility rubric, which is used across disciplines to help learners assess their work habits, such as integrity, collaboration, and engagement. Using the rubrics, teachers initiate reflection conversations, allowing students to recognize their strengths while setting intentions for improvement. Students also engage in tasks that require applying knowledge to authentic scenarios. In a geometry open honors class, the playground design midterm task asks students to apply the properties of similar triangles to solve a design problem that involves proportional reasoning and prediction. This task simulates real-world engineering logic, requiring students to justify their claims —a clear example of applied learning and problem-solving. Additionally, in a history classroom, students applied their knowledge of the Fifth Amendment to real-life scenarios, eventually connecting it to the O.J. Simpson trial and the concept of double jeopardy. Opportunities for creative expression are also built into advisory time and community-building practices. Students participate in weekly restorative justice circles to reflect on social, personal, and community issues. These 15-minute sessions offer a safe forum for students to develop their voice, empathy, and communication skills beyond traditional academic areas, while fostering trust within their community. As the school continues to review and write the curriculum for most departments, there are significant opportunities to embed the many initiatives rolled out, such as Highlander Habits, engaging in equity work, and the rigor and engagement tool. Embedding these elements into unit plans, performance tasks, and common assessments will not only align with the school's vision of the graduate but will also deepen student engagement and ownership of learning across all content areas. This curriculum development process represents a leverage point for making student-led learning the norm rather than the exception.

At Somerville High School, students engage in learning experiences that require them to analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge in rigorous and authentic ways. Instructional design across content areas emphasizes critical thinking, real-world application, and collaboration. In a grade 10 English class, student presentations on Greek mythology demonstrate content mastery and introduce an assignment that the student presenter facilitates and creates. Similarly, in a history class, students analyze current events, examining their potential impact on communities, demonstrating their ability to connect academic content to real-world issues, and evaluating

sources critically. In AP Physics, students complete a bungee lab where they apply conservation of energy principles and prior knowledge to predict how close a fallen object would stop above a target. Students design their procedures independently, perform accurate measurements, and use mathematical modeling, requiring high-order thinking and problem-solving. The lack of a trial run further elevates the rigor of the assessment. Performance-based learning also emphasizes higher-order thinking in the CTE programs. In the Fab Lab, students developed original designs to determine how best to bring their product to life using advanced equipment. Students apply abstract concepts to tangible problems during this lesson, connecting practical knowledge and accurate solutions. The rigor and engagement analysis tool is increasingly used across departments to design learning experiences that promote productive struggle, inquiry, and independent thinking. For instance, the geometry open honors playground design midterm task challenges students to apply their understanding of similar triangles to solve a real-world design problem. This task aligns directly with the tool's complexity and student ownership criteria. Students in a health class are asked to find events that directly connect to their health and well-being. Following their investigation, students synthesize their findings to advocate for a person who supports a cause or a policy. This work fosters a classroom environment where students use original thinking to build on an investigation.

Learners engage with many assessment strategies that support academic growth, inform instructional decisions, and align with content standards and the school's vision of the graduate at Somerville High School. Assessment practices include formative and summative components, common assessments, performance-based tasks, and authentic presentations, all designed to provide students with meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Formative assessments are widely used across classrooms to guide instruction and provide immediate feedback. Teachers employ various strategies, including exit tickets, collaborative group problem-solving, real-time checks for understanding, and one-on-one conferencing. For example, in an Algebra 1 classroom, students work through multi-step group problems. At the same time, the teacher circulates, listening in, prompting thinking, and adjusting the lesson based on students' responses. This embedded formative assessment ensures students' thinking is visible and feedback is given quickly. Teachers also use formative assessments during instructional cycles. In grade 10 English, teachers use timed writing prompts to assess students' argument development under pressure and provide revision opportunities to strengthen work over time. Students are evaluated on how much content they can meaningfully develop within a 40-minute window. Common assessments are used across grade levels and content areas to ensure consistent and equitable learning expectations. In ninth-grade biology, for instance, students completed an ecology milestone assessment with both a standard and honors component. The open honors model enables students to complete additional work for honors credit, and assessments are structured so that students in mixed pairs can submit a shared product, encouraging collaboration while maintaining differentiated rigor. Teachers collaborate in grade-level and subject-specific teams to calibrate assessment design, share student work, and revise tasks based on data and patterns. This collaborative approach promotes best practices and ensures assessments remain consistent and culturally responsive. The school also emphasizes presentations of learning and authentic assessment experiences. In CTE programs, students complete tasks aligned with standards and often produce work that serves real clients or community needs. For example, carpentry students create products, such as lending libraries and cornhole boards, to be delivered to local schools or community partners. This demonstrates mastery of content and skills, and provides students with a clear audience and purpose for their work. To deepen these practices, the school should continue building capacity around performance-based assessments in departments where they are less established and ensure that student self-assessment and reflection are embedded into the assessment cycle across all grade levels.

Somerville High School fosters a learning environment where students are encouraged to revisit, refine, and resubmit their work as part of an ongoing growth process. Across departments and grade levels, students are provided with multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning over time, supported by systematic structures for feedback, revision, and reflection. The school's grading framework ensures these opportunities are embedded into every course. All non-AP courses follow a consistent breakdown: 65 percent of the grade is based on summative assessments, 25 percent on practice, and 10 percent on responsibility. Responsibility grades are formally discussed with students at least twice per quarter in many classes, and often involve student-teacher conferences in U.S. History, science, and MLE classes. These conferences promote reflection and help students understand how their behaviors and work habits affect their progress. Feedback is consistent, specific, and timely across disciplines. These tools clarify expectations and provide students with written feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. Rubrics often provide detailed feedback aligned with each indicator, and cover sheets offer detailed information regarding the multiple modes of learning throughout the assessment. For

example, in English, students are given time to revise on-demand writing assessments based on rubric-aligned feedback, particularly those who scored in the developing or meets range. This practice ensures students can make meaningful improvements to their work rather than simply receiving a final grade. In math and science classrooms, the use of frequent exit tickets, self-assessments, and midpoint checks for understanding enables students to adjust their thinking during the learning process. Teachers routinely circulate and offer verbal feedback in real-time, and students are expected to apply this feedback in subsequent attempts or extensions of the task. In Algebra 1 class, students receive scaffolded support and are encouraged to explain their reasoning, allowing the teacher to quickly identify misunderstandings and alleviate confusion. The responsibility rubric, aligned with the Highlander Habits, engages and prepares students. The exploratory program in CTE further supports this concept. Every freshman rotates through a variety of vocational programs between September and April. In May and June, students are placed in the shop of their choice (pending acceptance), providing a hands-on, long-term opportunity to reflect on their interests and revise their learning path before committing to a full-year program as sophomores.

Across content areas, students consistently use technology in informed and effective ways to access content and prepare for post-secondary academic and career environments. All students are issued Chromebooks, and Google Suite is used as the primary resource for classroom management and instruction delivery. This practice streamlines student access and allows for independent academic planning. In most classrooms, students use Chromebooks and assignments posted in Google Classroom to engage in learning activities. Technology is also used to support and supplement in real-time. In a science class, a teacher used motion sensors and digital graphing tools to display the speed and force of an object during a live presentation. Students could see the changes on the projector as the experiment unfolded, providing them with feedback and furthering their understanding through multiple learning modes. Students routinely use technology to research, create, and problem-solve across disciplines. In a grade 10 history class, students were tasked with generating an essential question, conducting independent research, and writing a paper supported by MLA-formatted sources. This multi-stage project required students to evaluate sources, build an annotated bibliography, and justify how their evidence aligned with their thesis, developing digital literacy and academic research skills. Technology also supports personalization and access for students. For example, students in an advanced manufacturing class work on increasingly complex designs, while beginners are introduced to the software and equipment through the same scaffolded and leveled assignments. Students also use technology to collaborate digitally and share their work beyond the classroom. The family history project in the UMASS Boston Dual Enrollment course is a powerful example. Through this project, students utilize research tools and digital platforms to document their family experiences and reflect on their identity. This work is often shared with family members, allowing students to gain a deeper understanding of their family's stories and providing an authentic audience and purpose for their work. Leveraging platforms like the *Highlander Times* and its official Facebook page to publicly celebrate student accomplishments, particularly performance-based tasks in CTE and core academic classes, can reinforce student pride and community recognition.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

Somerville High School clearly articulates its core values (perseverance, integrity, responsibility, and open-mindedness) as well as the beliefs about learning:

- 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.

During the Collaborative Conference Visit, four Priority Areas for Growth were identified and agreed upon related to:

1. Improving daily and period attendance, creating stronger connections with students, and better tracking the effectiveness of interventions
2. Ensuring the implementation of agreed-upon school-wide common practices or Tier 1 interventions to support students
3. Increasing the number of students, but particularly students from underrepresented groups, who are part of authentic, real-world, and work-based learning
4. Developing 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 fully incorporating the Highlander Habits into all aspects of the school culture

The school clearly articulates the vision of a graduate through its eight Highlander Habits.

- growth mindset
- physical and emotional wellness
- communication
- collaboration
- critical and creative thinking
- culturally competent citizenship
- post-secondary readiness
- responsibility

The school provides sample rubrics that explain each habit in detail, allowing staff and students to assess these skills to some degree. However, it is unclear whether all of the rubrics are utilized or how. During the Collaborative Conference visit, staff were experimenting with using the responsibility rubric. This year, staff were asked to utilize the responsibility rubric in each of their classes, with the exception of AP courses, credit recovery classes, and a handful of other singleton classes. This assessment on the responsibility rubric is weighted as 10 percent of the quarterly grade in the courses where it is utilized.

Commitment

The school is highly committed to maximizing student engagement and increasing attendance. Much of their efforts over the past two years have focused on supporting Tier 1 interventions for students with poor attendance. This includes a detailed communication plan for staff to follow as well as documentation within the Insights

platform. However, there are inconsistencies between staff and administration in following through with these plans, which should be addressed to ensure the entire school is adhering to them. There are also inconsistencies from community to community regarding how they communicate with each other and with the families of individual students, as well as what is being documented in the Insights program.

The school strives to create individualized and personalized learning plans for each student, with a strong focus on supporting struggling students, including efforts to ensure that every student has a connection to at least one trusted adult. There is a clear commitment to providing a wide array of academic opportunities for students, with a major focus on revamping the school's Career and Technical Education (CTE) scheduling. These efforts have resulted in an increase in enrollment in CTE programs. This is evident in the work they have been doing to pilot the ECHO program. ECHO, which stands for Experiential Culminating Hands-On Opportunity, will allow all seniors to participate in either a co-op, clinical, or internship experience.

There is some commitment to implementing the school's vision of a graduate. Students have limited familiarity with the vision of the graduate but are familiar with the Highlander Habits terminology, which is reviewed within their advisory communities. Students are currently only assessed using the responsibility rubric. Other Highlander Habits are not assessed consistently, despite the creation of rubrics and self-assessment tools. Some classrooms display the habits, and students are aware of them. A greater commitment will help fully implement the vision of the graduate. The vision has yet to be fully embedded in the curriculum documents, but the school is making slow progress toward assessing more of the habits. The school has yet to report its progress with embedding the vision of the graduate into curriculum documents for families or the community. This reporting should become part of the school's communication plan as the school continues to develop ways to measure the impact of the vision on student learning.

The staff have been provided a standard format and expectations for creating a consistent, written curriculum for all courses. There has been inconsistent implementation, particularly within departments that have a high number of singleton classes. There have been challenges with allocating time during the workday to complete this work. Departments are at varying levels of progress since the Collaborative Conference visit. There is a commitment to providing professional development for teachers, including faculty and department meetings, Wednesday early release days, and time dedicated to professional learning communities (PLCs). There are also professional development modules that allow for more personalized choice and growth for individual teachers. More time should be allocated to curriculum development and documentation. Additionally, the curriculum review cycle is a seven-year cycle due to funding concerns, as purchasing new curriculum and materials simultaneously would be too costly. However, much of the work needed to embed the vision of a graduate and Highlander Habits into the school's curriculum does not need to wait for this lengthy cycle.

Competency

The administrative team and faculty are dedicated to helping students. They demonstrate competency to make the necessary adjustments to address most of the Priority Areas, underscored by creating a district improvement plan. They have developed a variety of systems and tools to support staff in supporting students (e.g., community meetings, a Tier 1 guide to supporting students, and a list of common practices for staff). There are also a variety of programs in place to support their diverse population.

The school possesses the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to implement its vision of the graduate. The staff has experience with the collaboration necessary to undertake this kind of change. Staff are able to meet with grade-based teams as well as community teams to discuss individual students and collaborate on instruction. The school sometimes offers professional development led by staff and outside providers. However, inconsistencies exist between communities and individual staff regarding how the vision is being implemented and how it is being assessed. The eight habits are primarily addressed during the freshman year and occasionally during monthly assemblies in the upper grades. However, at present, they are focusing on only one of the eight habits, "responsibility," with fidelity.

Clarifying expectations for the use of the responsibility rubrics will increase consistency in measuring that habit with fidelity. The school has developed some tools, such as rubrics and assessment sheets, for the other seven habits, but has not established a plan to utilize them regularly and assess student progress and understanding of the habits, nor has it empowered

allstaff to do this work.

Teachers make efforts to work on curriculum mapping and have been provided with a template. Some teachers are confident in completing curriculum maps, while others require professional development to do so effectively. The English, social studies, and world language departments have completed some work but are still missing some components. Curriculum mapping is a multi-year process, and the understanding of how much time is needed has yet to be addressed. Outstanding tasks include utilizing the provided template with fidelity as well as professional development on its use. Allocating sufficient time for staff to collaborate on the curriculum maps, scope and sequence documentation, as well as unit plans for each course. Once the district allocates sufficient time, training, and resources to this task, progress should be quick.

The school has the capacity to hire and retain a sufficient number of teachers and support staff, allowing for small class sizes. Financial resources support stipends for teachers to assume roles beyond their professional day, including curriculum work.

The district has the competency to ensure professional development time for teachers, utilize internal faculty experts to lead work in various areas, including faculty and department meetings, and address curriculum development needs, as well as devote time for reflection on their practice. However, school leaders need to be explicit with expectations and provide adequate time to complete the tasks. The district should also be cognizant of this and consider reinstating the stipends that were once available for staff to move this work forward.

There is competency within the school board and administration to understand the findings and requirements that support the school in addressing its Priority Areas, as well as other initiatives the school is developing to support students and staff.

Capacity

The school has the capacity to implement its vision of the graduate. The identified priorities for the vision of the graduate are qualities that are already promoted in a variety of areas within the school, so formalizing, measuring, and reporting on those connections will be a natural process. Utilizing existing time in the schedule for professional development and explicitly devoting time to determining how to best measure and ensure all the habits are being explicitly taught will be necessary to fully implement the vision of the graduate.

The administrative team and faculty demonstrate some capacity to complete curriculum updates. However, there is no reference to updating the curriculum or working towards embedding/including the Highlander habits within the current school improvement plan.

The school has the capacity to ensure professional development, including faculty and department meetings, address curriculum development needs, and provide time for reflection on practice, collaboration, and an increase in content area knowledge, as well as feedback to maintain best practices in teaching. The school capitalizes on in-house resources for professional development.

Additional Information

Standard 2 Principle 3

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

The school is in the developing phase of Principle 2.3. Curriculum and courses are designed to build upon prior knowledge and previous coursework. The school emphasizes the application of knowledge and skills across disciplines and creates authentic learning experiences for students. As a comprehensive high school, CTE programs are available to all students to pursue a career in an occupational area after an exploratory process that generally takes place freshman year if a student chooses. The cooperative education program is a continuation of Chapter 74 vocational program that provides qualified junior and senior students with a vocational occupational employment opportunity in an industrial setting. The work-based learning program offers students in-school internships, out-of-school internships, mentorships, and work-study opportunities. In some cases, if a student is already employed outside of school, the student may ask the school to connect with the employer under the work-based learning program, thus reinforcing authentic learning. Through the early college and dual enrollment program, students have advanced college access at one of the school's partnering colleges (Cambridge College, Bunker Hill Community College) which prepares students academically for college and strengthens students' skills in self-advocacy, time management, and professional communication. These courses allow students to get transferable college credit, and also count toward graduation requirements. Students actively practice Highlander Habits and prepare for post-secondary education and/or immediate employment upon graduation. CTE coursework and partnerships provide rich opportunities for all students.

Other departments are working to make connections across disciplines emphasizing learner application of knowledge and skills. Social studies and English have begun to horizontally align writing expectations in ninth grade. All performing and visual arts courses at SHS emphasize the value of the arts as multidisciplinary, collaborative, and project-based courses of study. Higher-order thinking is cultivated through the development of studio habits of mind (Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education) and other formative assessment tools. Specific courses, such as the multilingual education (MLE) theatre arts seminar, have been designed to align national arts standards with WIDA learning frameworks, providing MLE students access to an innovative and effective course of study that increases language proficiency while nourishing creativity. One interdisciplinary collaboration involves fine arts and science where they collaborate on a STEAM project for all grade levels. Although there are many strong, interesting connections and collaborations happening, more needs to be done to ensure that all departments are involved and that all of the work connects with the school's vision of the graduate.

Standard 2 Principle 4

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

The school is implementing Principle 2.4. The program of studies is available in English, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish. Instructional practices meet the learning needs of each student. Students may take courses at the college preparatory, honors, and advanced placement levels. Chapter 74 vocational programs are open to all students who have elected to take part in the exploratory program as freshmen. Several subject areas now offer open honors courses, which mix levels within a class; teachers differentiate classwork and assessments based on students' learning needs. Most inclusion classes follow the co-teaching model, allowing

teachers to regularly scaffold, differentiate, and implement flex grouping for structured group activities during lessons; all courses implement these same strategies as needed. Lesson objectives are accessible on the whiteboard, in assignments, or on Google Classroom to ensure that all students understand and can identify what they are expected to learn. Many teachers use exit tickets to determine if students have met the objective(s). Based on the assessment of these exit tickets, teachers review, reteach, and make adjustments in future classes. Observations of students during class and review of their work to determine group and individual strengths and areas of need also guide future instruction and assessment. Students may demonstrate mastery of learning through presentations (live or pre-recorded), role-playing, written work, performance-based assessments, and other means. There is almost always an element of choice in most classes. Section 4 of the Tier 1 Guide to Supporting Students also includes interventions to help struggling students.

Several content areas have instructional coaches within each department to push into classes for support, offer differentiation strategies, and solidify lessons. Instructional coaches also help teachers implement baseline and formative assessments, collect data to more effectively address students' needs, and use this data to drive reteaching and revising lessons.The school-wide focus for PD this year, surrounding Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain,* has led to increased rigor for all students, particularly culturally diverse students, and has informed school-wide common practices, teacher-run workshops, and staff working groups. These workshops and working groups are designed to encourage new instructional strategies and methods for increasing personalization. Also, more open honors courses, increases in CTE co-op offerings, and the new senior ECHO project have led to professional development in these areas to make sure that these programs are accessible to all students.

Standard 3 Principle 1

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

The school is in the implementing phase of Principle 3.1. A core responsibility of the school improvement council, which meets once per month, is to design, discuss, and implement a school improvement plan (SIP) aligned with the district improvement plan (DIP). The group, led by one co-principal and comprising parents, educators, school committee members, and students, has updated the plan using backward design to reflect the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and the Highlander Habits (the school's vision of the graduate). After several years of not fully functioning due to COVID and major leadership changes, the school has completed the plan. Schoolwide, measurable goals include a shared vision of teaching, learning, and community, based on the district goals of equity and high expectations. This vision is driven by research through the instructional leadership team (ILT) and the administrative team. To date, the group has developed common practices to support and learning. Specific initiatives, such as open honors, increased rigor, the increased use of performance-based assessments, and grading for equity, have made this work a lived process. Educators have provided feedback through department meetings, surveys, and committee work. Students provided feedback through the reimagined student council and student voice surveys once per quarter in many classes

Standard 3 Principle 4

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

The school is implementing Principle 3.4. There are collaborative structures in place that support the coordination and implementation of the curriculum. This occurs at both the school and department levels. Starting in 2016, the core departments of English, science, math, and social studies began implementing common instructional practices in collaboration with the Landmark School to increase student engagement and independence in the classroom. In 2020 the administrative team, in collaboration with the instructional leadership team (ILT), modified common practices to align with the schoolwide initiative to incorporate the practices of Zarrata Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain.* Staff then set professional practice goals related to this work, with

departments using a common vocabulary and a set of priorities for instruction. While some staff members report that there is not enough common planning time to fully incorporate the work, there is time built into the schedule for it. Interdisciplinary grade-level teams meet regularly, and core academic ninth, tenth, and MLE educators meet weekly to discuss students who are struggling academically, plan, and take action. The weekly schedule for all school, department, and professional learning community (PLC) meetings is available at the start of the school year, so educators are aware of their planning time. Informal collaboration happens daily in the various teacher planning spaces throughout the school. Many co-teachers have common planning time. Several departments are in their second year of a district-led curriculum review, where they are reviewing, updating, and standardizing curriculum documents, maps, and units. This process also includes a vertical alignment of skills within the multi-year scope and sequence of the discipline at the high school and coordination with the K-8 sending schools in terms of content and skills. Other content areas are preparing for their curriculum review stage.

Standard 3 Principle 6

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

The school is implementing Principle 3.6. There are several productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning. The school involves parents/guardians in parent-teacher conferences, college planning programs, financial aid information night, scholarship night, freshman orientation, and the school improvement council. Educators, parents/guardians, and students take part in interview committees and the school improvement council. Local community organizations, such as Groundworks Somerville and Teen Empowerment, work with the school and Somerville's students on green initiatives and youth leadership, respectively. Juniors and seniors participate in work-based learning and may adjust their schedules to maintain their high school graduation requirements while taking part in employment/internship opportunities. Some students take part in the early college program, an opportunity that allows them to earn credits from Cambridge College or Bunker Hill Community College while still in high school. Somerville High School also collaborates with the Families Together Somerville program, a family-to-family mentoring initiative that pairs the families of first-generation, college-going juniors with another Somerville family that has direct experience with the college application process. Parents and guardians with familiarity in the college application process serve as guides and mentors to selected juniors and their families as they navigate the college application process. The school does have a large number of school/community partnerships, but more needs to be done beyond extending invitations in target languages to get families, especially MLE families, involved. The faculty survey prior to the CC reflected that eighty percent of respondents "communicate with parents to let them know what goes on in my class or at our school"; since that time, even more time has been added for teachers to regularly communicate with families. Teachers receive detailed reminders with dates for completion of such tasks and make notes on Somerville Student Insights where team members can see when contact has been made.

Commendations

Commendation

The attendance policy, that is prioritized around student daily and class attendance, with positive implementation of the attendance success plans for students identified as habitual offenders

Commendation

The implementation of a comprehensive Tier 1 guide that provides numerous resources and demonstrates a commitment to supporting students

Commendation

The dedication to increasing the number of students involved in work-based learning, along with the creativity and passion of CTE educators

Commendation

The commitment to the ongoing development of the Highlander Habits

Commendation

The completion of the English language arts curriculum and world language guides that ensure vertical alignment in grades 9 through 12

Commendation

The dedication of staff to open opportunities for all students to access high-level courses through open honors, AP offerings, and increased dual enrollment opportunities

Commendation

The intentional implementation of the ECHO project with stakeholder input

Commendation

The inclusion of diverse voices, topics, and backgrounds in the development of the curriculum to ensure representation of and relevance for the student body

Commendation

The development of empathy, communication skills, and trust within the school community supported through weekly 15-minute restorative justice circles held during advisory time

Commendation

The positive and emotionally safe school climate created through a nationally recognized student-led mediation program that addresses specific student needs

The promotion of reflection, ownership, and consistent expectations for behavior and engagement achieved through the school-wide use of a responsibility rubric aligned with the Highlander Habits and integrated into most courses

The high levels of rigor and applied learning demonstrated through authentic, performance-based assessments that simulate real-world scenarios across content areas

The effective integration of technology across disciplines to enhance differentiated instruction, build digital literacy, and provide real-time feedback on student learning

The support for informed decision-making and early career exploration provided through a rotating exploratory CTE program that engages all freshmen in hands-on experiences across multiple vocational areas

The commitment to increasing access to honors and AP coursework, particularly for economically disadvantaged students

The design of cognitively demanding tasks guided by the school-developed rigor and engagement analysis tool used across departments

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that targeted curriculum mapping with a focus on the vision of the graduate is included in the Somerville High School Improvement Plan

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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.

To monitor the school's progress, the Commission requires that the principal submit a First Report of Progress and Planning and routine Three- and Six-Year Reports of Progress and Planning describing the school's progress implementing the Priority Areas as well as submitting an updated improvement/growth plan. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards or Priority Areas for Growth are not being met in a satisfactory manner, if additional information is needed on matters relating to the school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation, or substantive changes occur in the school.

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 impacts the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included on the next page. All other substantive changes should be included in the Reports on Progress and Planning 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, hosted a Collaborative Conference, developed an improvement/growth plan, and completed a Summary Report. The time and effort dedicated to the Accreditation process, school improvement/growth, the Summary Report, and the preparation for the visit ensured a successful Initial/Decennial Accreditation 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: Ms. Kelley St. Coeur - Ashland High School

Assistant Chair: Mr. Jeffrey Lizotte - Oakmont Regional High School

Team Members

Gail Farrington - Mansfield High School

Sarah Lefebvre - Wachusett Regional High School

Bryan Riley - Doherty Memorial High School

Dr. Carla Scuzzarella - Saugus Middle High School

Meaghan Travers - Brockton High School