

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**



SELF-STUDY GUIDE

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SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

**FOR 2011 SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

The Charge for the Committee on School Culture and Leadership

This Standard Committee is charged with the responsibility of developing a document that demonstrates the extent to which the school is adhering to the Standard for Accreditation on School Culture and Leadership. Committee members should remember that the process of determining adherence to the Standard is a dynamic one. As evidence is gathered and discussed, the Committee's conclusions may change and evolve, be altered and refined.

STEP 1 -- Understanding the Standard and Preparing to Begin

- A. Make a copy of this Self-Study Guide for each member of the Standard Committee from the website: <http://cpss.neasc.org>. Take care you have printed the 2011 version.
- B. Read and discuss the Standard for Accreditation on School Culture and Leadership so that all members of the Standard Committee develop a common understanding of the effective practices in the Standard. The Standard is comprised of both the narrative portion and the numbered indicators. The concepts in the narrative portion are manifested through the indicators. As part of your discussion, utilize the guiding questions and glossary from the document, *Explanation of the Standards for Accreditation*, 2011 located at <http://cpss.neasc.org> under the "Getting Started" tab.
- C. Engage all members of the committee in an activity to identify (imagine) what practices one would see for each indicator at a school which was meeting the School Culture and Leadership Standard at the highest level. For example, with regard to Indicator #9, committee members might suggest:
 - 1. the principal offers regular coffees for parents to meet with him/her and lunch-time discussion groups with students;
 - 2. surveys and questionnaires of students and parents are often used in the decision-making process;
 - 3. teachers, students, and parents each have formal roles in advisory groups or a site council;
 - 4. teachers participate in and chair standing and ad-hoc committees.
- D. When the practices have been generated, compare the practices to the Standard's Rating Guide in the acceptable and exemplary categories on page 14 of this booklet.

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School Culture and Leadership

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

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

STEP 2 -- Collecting Data Related to the Standard on School Culture and Leadership

A. Data Already Gathered

1. State Report

Examine your school's state report for its implications for the Standard on School Culture and Leadership. Identify the indicators in the Standard for which the specific data in the report is relevant.

2. Opinion Surveys

Review the results of the opinion surveys administered to parents, students, and teachers with regard to this Standard.

B. Data to be Gathered by Committee:

1. Gather the following information as evidence you will need later in this process. You will eventually need to **attach this evidence to the self-study narrative essay**.

- a. A one-page description of the school's supervision and evaluation process (5.5)
- b. A copy of the school's daily schedule with a brief (no more than one-page) explanation of how it works (5.6)
- c. An organizational chart that illustrates how the various components of the school are organized and related to each other (i.e., departments, content areas, teams, clusters, pathways, academies, etc.) (5.8)
- d. An organizational chart of the school's decision-making bodies/processes, identifying the responsibility and membership of each (5.9)
- e. A copy of the principal's job description (5.12)

2. Gather the following information as evidence you will need for each indicator in the Standard (as noted in parenthesis). You will eventually **make this evidence available in the workroom at the school**. Please note: it is possible that you may not find evidence for all indicators.

***Indicator 1** -- The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.*

- a. Student, parent, and teacher handbooks (5.1)
- b. Copies of discipline and attendance policies (5.1)
- c. Comparative annual data on disciplinary actions, incidences of vandalism, et. al. (5.1)

- d. Specific evidence of programs or activities that are related to improving school climate (5.1)
- e. Specific evidence of programs to document that students feel a sense of pride and ownership in their school (5.1)
- f. A list of examples that document how the school fosters student responsibility for learning (5.1)
- g. A list of examples that document how the school promotes high expectations for all students (5.1)
- h. Survey or other assessment results related to school climate (5.1)

Indicator 2 -- *The school is equitable and inclusive where every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area.*

- i. A list of the courses/classes that are heterogeneously grouped in each curriculum area (5.2)

Indicator 3 -- *There is a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.*

- j. A one-page description of the school's formal, on-going program (if the school has a formal advisory or student mentoring program, the curriculum should be included) through which each students has an adult in the school who knows the student well (5.3)

Indicator 4 -- *In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:*

- *engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning*
- *use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices*
- *dedicate formal time to implement professional development*
- *apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment*
- k. A description (list with dates, number of hours, and participants) of the formal sessions and informal occasions when the principal and professional staff have engaged in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning (5.4)
- l. A list of the resources outside the school employed by faculty to maintain currency with best practices (workshops, seminars, programs) (5.4)
- n. A description (list which includes program title, number of participants, number of hours, and a brief description of the program) of the formal time allotted over the past two years to professional development for all faculty (5.4)

Indicator 5 -- *School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.*

- o. A list of resources (seminars, courses, workshops, programs) attended by administrators who supervise and evaluate teachers (5.5)

Indicator 6 -- *The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.*

- p. A list of time available for faculty to meet to collaborate (e.g., PLC groups, early release, late start days)

Indicator 7 -- *Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.*

- q. A copy of the master schedule with (a) individual teacher loads, (b) class sizes for every section in every course, and (c) overall class size by department (5.7)

Indicator 8 -- *The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.*

- r. A list of the school's leadership team with examples of how the principal has involved other building leaders in instructional improvement (5.8)
- s. Samples of communications, activities, and decisions of the principal's instructional leadership relating to the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations (5.8)

Indicator 9 -- *Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.*

- t. Copies of any surveys (beyond the Endicott survey) administered to students, faculty, and/or parents which ask for opinions about school programs and/or practices (5.9)
- u. Descriptions of other decision-making roles, such as parent and student participation on hiring or other committees (5.9)

Indicator 10 -- *Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.*

- v. A list of leadership initiatives with names of teachers who have exercised leadership to improve the school (5.10)

Indicator 11 -- *The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.*

- w. A list of collaborative, reflective, and constructive meetings which include the principal and superintendent and/or the principal and school board (5.11)

Indicator 12 -- *The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.*

- x. The relevant pages from the district policy and procedures manual regarding the principal's decision-making authority (5.12)
- y. A list of examples that reveal alignment or misalignment with policies in previous item (5.12)

STEP 3 -- Analyzing Evidence Related to the Standard on School Culture and Leadership

Once you have gathered the data requested in Step 2, and using the prompts that follow in Step 3, analyze and discuss all the gathered evidence and information as it relates to the various indicators in the Standard on School Culture and Leadership.

- A. Write at least one paragraph for each indicator in the Standard; for some indicators with bullets, you may need to write more than one paragraph.
- B. Write a conclusion for each indicator and underline the conclusion in the paragraph. For example, for indicator #5, "The school has a formal, on-going program through which every freshman and sophomore student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations; however, this personalization program has not yet been expanded to include juniors and seniors."
- C. Write sentences to complete your paragraph that justify or support your underlined conclusion. Your evidence in these sentences forms the details that justify or support your underlined conclusion.
- D. This narrative essay should be 8-12 double-spaced pages.

Prompts for Step 3

- 1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.**

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the student, parent, and teacher handbooks, copies of discipline and attendance policies, comparative annual data on disciplinary actions, and incidences of vandalism, *et. al.*, what does the evidence show about the school community's efforts to consciously and continuously build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning?
- b. Based on an examination of the program/activity descriptions related to improving school climate and the examples that illustrate student pride and ownership in their school, what does the evidence show about the school community's efforts to consciously and continuously foster student responsibility for learning which results in shared ownership, pride and high expectations for all?
- c. Based on an examination of the opinion surveys or other assessments, the examples that document how the school fosters student responsibility for learning, and the examples that document how the school promotes high expectations for all students, what does the evidence show about the school community's efforts to consciously and continuously build a supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- d. State the extent to which the school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

2. The school is equitable and inclusive where every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on an examination of the courses/classes that are heterogeneously grouped in each curriculum area, what does the evidence show about *equitability and inclusiveness*, especially as it relates to each student being enrolled in heterogeneous classes in *each* curriculum area over the course of four years in high school?
- b. Based on an examination of the information which includes (1) the number of students and percentage of student body by identifiable ethnic and racial background enrolled in each level of a course offered and (2) the number of levels offered for each course and the percentage of racial and ethnic background students in each level, what does the evidence show about the school's equitability and inclusiveness, especially as it relates to each student being enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area over the course of four years in high school?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the extent to which the school is equitable and inclusive where every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area.

3. There is a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the school's formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well, what does the evidence illustrate about every student in the school's personalized connection with one adult?
- b. Based on a review of the school's formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well, what does the evidence suggest about how the adult assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the extent to which the school provides a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

- 4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:**
- **engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning**
 - **use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices**
 - **dedicate formal time to implement professional development**
 - **apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment**

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the resources outside the school employed by faculty to maintain currency with best practices (workshops, seminars, programs), what does the evidence show about the principal and professional staff's ability to remain current with best practices?
- b. Based on a review of the evidence of formal time dedicated to implement professional development, what does the evidence show about the principal and professional staff's application of the skills, practices, and ideas gained from professional development to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the extent to which the principal and professional staff's use of professional discourse, reflection, inquiry, analysis, and professional development improve student learning.

- 5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.**

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the school's supervision and evaluation process as well as the number of new and veteran teacher observations and evaluations completed each year, what does the evidence show about how school leaders use research-based supervision and evaluation to improve student learning?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which school leaders use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.

- 6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.**

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the school's daily schedule, how does the schedule support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which the school's organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.

7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of individual teacher loads and class sizes for every section in every course, what does the evidence show about teachers' ability to meet the learning needs of individual students?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of all students.

8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of the organizational chart that illustrates how various components of the school are organized and related to each other, what does the evidence show about the relationship between the principal and other building leaders and their ability to provide instructional leadership rooted in the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations?
- b. Based upon a review of the sampling of communications, activities and decisions of the principal and other building leaders, what does the review illustrate about the provision of instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values and beliefs?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the extent to which the principal works with other building leaders to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of the school's decision-making bodies/processes, including the responsibilities and membership, as well as recent issues considered and the inclusivity of decision-making processes, what does the evidence show about teachers, parents, and students involvement in *meaningful* decision-making that promotes responsibility and ownership?
- b. Based upon a review of any surveys administered to students, parents, and teachers that ask for opinions about school programs and/or practices, what does the information reveal about how parents, students, and teachers are involved in meaningful decision-making with defined roles that promote responsibility and ownership?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the extent to which teachers, students, and parents are involved with defined roles in meaningful decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.

10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of leadership endeavors designed and/or implemented by teachers to improve the school, what does the evidence show about teachers exercising initiative and leadership in order to improve the school and to increase students' engagement in learning?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.

11.. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of meetings between the principal and superintendent and/or the school board, what is the evidence that illustrates the principal, superintendent and school board are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based upon a review of the policy and procedure manual, the principal's job description, and recent decisions which have been upheld by the superintendent and board, what does the evidence show about the *sufficiency* of the principal's decision-making authority?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

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RATING GUIDE

School Culture and Leadership

A rating of **DEFICIENT** is appropriate if any of the following exist:

- There is no formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
- The principal, working with other building leaders, fails to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
- The school is not safe

A rating of **LIMITED** is appropriate if the school has a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations; the principal marginally provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations; and the school is safe, but:

- The school is not equitable and inclusive by ensuring that every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area
- The school board and superintendent fail to provide the principal with the sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school

A rating of **ACCEPTABLE** is appropriate if the school has a formal, on-going program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations; the principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations; the school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all; and:

- The school is equitable and inclusive where every student, over the course of four years of high school, is enrolled in heterogeneous classes in each curriculum area
- Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students
- The school board and superintendent provide the principal with the sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school
- The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students
- The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
- In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
 - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
 - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
 - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
 - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment

A rating of **EXEMPLARY** is appropriate if all the descriptors in the **ACCEPTABLE** rating are met and:

- School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning
- Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership

- Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning

STEP 4 -- Writing the Executive Summary

Write the Executive Summary of the conclusions and evidence. Consult the Guidelines for Review of Standards Essays and Executive Summaries in the *Accreditation Handbook* (page 37).

Content of the Executive Summary

- Use the rating guide provided on the previous pages to determine the school's level of adherence to the Standard on School Culture and Leadership, based on the conclusions and supportive evidence in the narrative essay.
- Write a one-page summary of the evidence in the narrative essay that led to the committee's judgment of the school's level of adherence to the Standard on School Culture and Leadership, making sure you include the rating, e.g., "acceptable."
- Identify and list the school's strengths in adhering to the *specific indicators* in the Standard on School Culture and Leadership.
- Identify and list the school's needs in adhering to the *specific indicators* in the Standard on School Culture and Leadership.
- Attach a list of the names, positions, and signatures of the committee members responsible for the preparation of this Essay and Executive Summary. Signatures of committee members attest to the thoroughness of the committee's work and to the veracity of the Essay and Executive Summary.