

## Leadership and Organization

### Support Standard

The school board and superintendent of the Barnacle Bay School District ensure that the principal has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning. A school board policy states, *“the principal shall play a leadership role in the development of new proposals for the instructional program, both in maintaining a consistent focus on student outcomes and in providing the necessary research and technical support for the school faculty.”* In action as well as in policy, the school board and superintendent look to the principal for all decisions regarding policy and procedure at the high school. The principal is expected to provide the educational agenda for the high school, to recruit and select staff members to serve students, and to produce and present a budget which reflects the needs of the school to the superintendent. The principal is widely recognized as having autonomy and decision-making authority for nearly all decisions related to the high school.

The BBHS principal plays a leadership role in the development of new proposals for the instructional program by participating in biweekly, district administrative team meetings. The administrative team meeting is the primary leadership forum for shaping the practice and policy of the district, with each administrator representing the views of educators from his/her building. The district administrative team determines the district goals. The high school principal guides the school in fulfilling the school’s mission and expectations for student learning by constructing the process for meeting the district goals. The principal seeks feedback from teachers, in particular the Learning Area Leaders, on the best model for advancing the goals of the high school. Many budgetary issues are discussed in faculty learning area meetings,

and input is provided to the high school principal. The principal then makes budgetary recommendations based on staff input to the superintendent and the school board. Nearly ninety percent of the high school staff and all members of the school board members indicated they believe the principal has appropriate responsibility, autonomy, and authority.

The principal is committed to creating and sharing a vision and direction for the school. Eighty percent of the monthly faculty meetings in the first half of 2006-2007 was spent addressing the district goals. At three monthly faculty meetings, teachers worked in small groups analyzing student work in order to establish plans to improve student achievement. Formally, the principal engages the community on the substantive events and student learning occurring at the high school via *monthly newsletters* making sure that parents are aware of such activities as student-led conferences, open house, parent/teacher meetings, and other activities that call for parental involvement. Additionally, the principal chairs monthly meetings of the Parent/Teacher Committee (PTC) that are open to any member of the community who wishes to discuss educational issues pertinent to the high school. The principal maintains an open-door policy to any student, parent, educator, or community member who would like the opportunity to speak directly with him about any issue. Informally, the principal maintains high visibility as he dedicates an inordinate amount of time to be present at many events in which BBHS students participate. Parents and students notice and appreciate the principal's interest and visibility. *One of the challenges identified by the principal in his entry plan from the fall of 2005 was to manage multiple school and district initiatives effectively.* With external accountability measures such as the Learning Results and the No Child Left Behind Act in place, managing these initiatives in a way that facilitates improved student learning is key to the continued success of students at Barnacle Bay High School.

The assistant principal embodies the attributes of a student-centered educational leader. She assists secondary educators in making sure that all students have a successful learning experience. Whether chairing team meetings, participating in Learning Area Leaders' meetings, addressing issues on the administrative team, or dealing directly with students, educators, and parents, the assistant principal is unwavering in her adherence to the guiding principles and core values of the high school. While several teachers make up the Learning Area Leaders' group whose primary purpose is to keep the focus on the district and school improvement goals, there are in fact many more teachers who demonstrate leadership in a variety of ways. Ninety-five percent of the staff agreed that teachers assume a variety of leadership roles. For example, most of the high school math teachers participated in a Math Inquiry Study Group that looked at the effectiveness of the math program 9-12 last summer. The final product proposed curriculum changes and included a process for learning from individual educators' best practices throughout the next academic year. In each of the past seven summers, groups of various teacher leaders emerged to take on other educational reforms such as writing across the curriculum, revising the BBHS student conferencing model, and revamping the Career Exploration Program, to name a few. Many of the changes have been made possible by the leadership of the district's K-12 Facilitator of School Improvement. Many of the school improvements made over the last decade have been the result of teacher leaders accepting the challenge and shepherding initiatives, a testament to the administrative leadership that creates an atmosphere that allows for this type of spontaneous leadership to emerge.

The high school's organizational units are the Learning Areas, which include Language Arts, Math/Science/Technology, Modern Language, Social Studies, Information Technology, and Fine Arts. These groups comprise the educators who teach within common disciplines along with one or two special educators. Facilitated by Learning Area Leaders, these groups actualize

the district and school goals. The Learning Area Leaders meet with administrators on a biweekly basis to look at a variety of issues associated with the mandates of the Learning Areas. This structure is intended to promote the attainment of educational objectives as it provides a gauge of how the district goals are being implemented on the level where the impact should be most apparent: the classroom. However, *faculty members have expressed the need to address the purpose and effectiveness of the current Learning Area Leader structure.*

A Freshman Team is in its fourth year of operation. The team is composed of two teachers from each of the four core disciplines: language arts, social studies, math, and science. The ninth-grade population is divided into two groups, and each group has a common team of teachers made up of one individual from each of the disciplines. Both the learning areas and freshman teams speak to the priority placed on interdisciplinary instruction and a coherent integrated curriculum. For example, over a decade ago, the math and science learning areas were combined to create more opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction and an integrated curriculum. This has led to the creation of common assessments and the collaboration of math and science teachers assessing student performance. The freshman team has broadened this practice so that the four major disciplines are integrated. These teams are supported in their work by the K-12 Facilitator of School Improvement.

Since the student population at Barnacle Bay High School is 98% white and generally middle class (4% of the town's population lives below the poverty level), conclusions regarding the distribution of students based on these criteria are difficult to formulate. Students with learning challenges are included in the general curriculum, as no students are enrolled in bilingual/ESL courses and only 1.6% of students are enrolled in one or more special education courses. In general, male and female students are equally represented in Honors and AP level courses. More female students are represented in accelerated (AP/honors) courses in English (58%) and

social studies (59%), while more male students take accelerated math (55%) and science (54%) courses. Most courses in the high school offer students the choice between an honors or college preparatory class. Other courses only offer one level. Students and parents, with input from teachers and advisors, choose the appropriate level based on a variety of personal factors.

*Creative scheduling* reflects a non-tracking philosophy and allows for students to switch between honors and college preparatory courses. *The philosophy is one in which the grouping of students occurs to meet students' needs.*

The special education program affords students a balance between individualized services and classroom instruction. The placing of special educators on Learning Area Teams helps ensure that those students with special needs are taken into consideration when assessments and curriculum are developed. Special educators at the high school work with content teachers to make sure that each student's IEP is actualized in the classroom. Special educators also make themselves available for consultations for the purpose of sharing strategies that might be employed by the classroom teacher. *The structure within the high school that best illustrates inclusiveness is the advisor/advisee program.* Each educator is assigned a group of 10-12 students which meets daily throughout the high school years. While this program is addressed in more detail later in the self-study, *it is the primary vehicle for encouraging a sense of community in the high school.* The heterogeneous composition of these groups allows students who might not otherwise interact to appreciate their differences.

The high school employs a block schedule, which provides flexibility to support instruction. For the majority of a student's course load, he will meet with a content teacher every other day for 90 minutes. Period three is the exception. This class meets four days per week for 70 minutes each day. Over a two-week period, the non-period three blocks meet for 450 minutes, while the period three block meets for 560 minutes. Consequently, period three

will have 55 minutes more instructional time per week. This time allows the schedule to accommodate two purposes. First, whenever an assembly, special event, or extended advisory occurs, the time is taken from period three; thus over the course of an academic year the amount of instructional time between period three and a regular block is intended to be nearly equal. Students also have a late arrival on Wednesdays during which time the faculty meets for 70 minutes. On Wednesday mornings, the faculty often meets in Learning Area teams or in other groupings to work on school and district improvement goals. *Recently, faculty members have noted the need for more full faculty meetings to create opportunities for large group discussions on issues ranging from standards-based grading to consistency in expectations in advisory period. The block schedule allows classes to meet for an extended period of time, providing flexibility for a variety of activities and assessments.* For example, in non-lab science courses such as biology or freshman science, the extended time presents an opportunity to complete a lab. Additionally, the extended periods have made it possible for Health Science courses to teach canoeing skills on a nearby river, social studies classes have sufficient time to conduct Socratic Seminars and debates, and students in English classes to compose entire essays within a class period.

BBHS is sensitive to the notion that change should be the result of a thoughtful, deliberate process that includes the input and creative thinking of all stakeholders. A few years ago the extracurricular code was under consideration by the School Committee. As part of the decision-making process, the School Committee set up an evening in which students, teachers, coaches, and school committee members created a product that was substantially modified from the original. Similarly, a committee made up of teachers, students, parents, and administrators interviews and recommends candidates for hire. *Action Teams are formed to address issues.* A team was formed last year to look at having all AP students take the AP exam at district expense. Student and parent input was gathered, and the school committee adopted

this policy for the 2006-07 year. An action team was formed two years ago that completely revamped the Career Exploration Program. Another team, made up mostly of students, studied the viability of altering the school schedule to allow for a later start. In these cases, as well as many others, groups were charged with going through the change process format (see the Change Process document in the visiting committee workroom) that outlines the type of data that needs to be gathered and the stakeholders that need to be included before a final recommendation can be considered. Faculty have noted the formation of *fewer action teams in recent years, as well as the disbanding of the steering committee*, which was charged with structuring available faculty time for working on district and school goals. The high school reaches out to students, parents, and teachers via online surveys. Such surveys include feedback on student-led conferences, registration conferences, Learning Area conferences, and athletic programs. [For survey samples see visiting committee workroom.] These surveys are indispensable in shaping the work of the high school in a number of areas.

The high school is *sensitive to the concept of low teacher-student ratios*. Course assignments are student-driven so that the needs of the student population determine what types of courses and the number of sections to be offered. For instance, the schedule is flexible enough to allow for two sections of AP Calculus if student demand exists in a given year. In 2006-07 an additional section of the U.S. Government course was added to meet student demand. Similar examples are evident in each subject area. In addition, over the past five years, a half-time modern language teacher has been added to meet growing student demand for modern language courses, and a half-time social studies teacher was added (and later eliminated) to reduce class sizes in U.S. History courses so that teachers could provide more individualized assistance to students on the Public Policy Project.

The average class size is 15 students, which generally allows for teachers to meet the needs of individual students and enables students to achieve the academic expectations of the curriculum and school-wide learning expectations. Eighty-four percent of students in the self-study survey agreed with the statement “teachers spend one-on-one time with me if I need it.” The average ratio by subject area is also relatively uniform, with average teacher-student ratios in art, English, math, science, social studies, and modern language classes between 1:14 and 1:16. *However, class sizes vary from 3 students (in a modern language course) to 47 students (in band).* In the self-study survey, slightly more than half of the teachers agreed that they have time to address individual student needs in all their classes. With a relatively small student population, *scheduling courses with equitable class sizes is a challenge that will continue to be addressed.*

While there are other structures in place to create a personalized learning environment such as literacy support, work-study, Alternative School, and Salty Creek Regional Technical School (SCRTS), the key structure that allows this standard to be met is the high school’s advisor/advisee program. (Please refer to the Advisor Handbook.) Every educator in the high school has an advisee group of 10-12 students who are assigned in the spring of the student’s eighth-grade year. Students meet with the advisor on a daily basis throughout their high school careers. The relationship ceremoniously ends when the advisor hands the diploma to the student at commencement. *This program impacts many areas of a student’s life.* It provides a means by which students have at least one adult in the school that knows them well, with 81 percent of the students indicating that there is at least one adult in the school, in addition to the guidance counselor, that they can talk to if they have a problem. The advisor/advisee program is also the venue for a variety of other programs that personalize student learning at the high school. These programs, described in detail elsewhere in the self-study, include student-led conferences, a career exploration program, freshman orientation, and registration conferences.

The advisor/advisee program also serves as the vehicle by which sensitive information is delivered to students and becomes the home base in times of school emergencies such as fire drills or other school evacuations.

Because the basic organizational unit for the high school is the learning area, collaboration across content areas occurs often at BBHS. Common assessments between math and science are used, and the products are calibrated and judged across the two disciplines. *The freshman team also practices this interdisciplinary approach.* Freshman team teachers have a common planning period, which provides opportunities for departmental and interdepartmental collaboration. In addition to these examples, each educator in the high school belongs to various professional learning groups, including a Portfolio Collegial Group. These groups are largely self-selected based on common professional goals or needs. While a variety of activities occur within this structure, the vast majority use student work across disciplines as a way of discussing individual practices.

Educators, along with support staff such as custodians, secretaries, and nutrition workers afford students the dignity and respect that they deserve. The Student Assistant Team (SAT) includes a secretary, an educational technician, a social worker, a special educator, the assistant principal, the school nurse, two guidance counselors, and two teachers. Each member of this team serves as a personal mentor to certain at-risk students. The director of school nutrition has formed a group called the Student Nutrition Advisory Counsel (SNAC) that reviews a variety of nutrition issues such as making sure meals exist for the school's vegetarian population, establishing a "Hit the Wall" program for after-school snacks, and planning theme days. The nutritional staff interacts with students and is an integral part of the high school team.

Student work is displayed in a variety of venues, not the least of which are the several display cabinets that hold successful student products and awards. A visit to most classrooms

will give clear evidence of what the students have been doing for the previous weeks. Student artwork is rotated on a semester basis in display cabinets and in framed photographs in the hallways. The music program offers numerous choral and instrumental performances during the year, and students produce a literary magazine, *The Pearl in the Oyster*, and the yearbook, *The Salty Dog*, that serve to showcase student literary and artistic talents. An awards ceremony in June honors freshmen, sophomores, and juniors with numerous academic and non-academic awards. A Senior Awards Breakfast in June recognizes students through the awarding of a number of scholarships and awards. A National Honor Society banquet, fourteen sports award ceremonies to recognize athletes, and a Playmakers award ceremony all recognize students for their accomplishments. Two prestigious awards, the Hector Hebert Award and the Robert Boyd Award, are presented to deserving seniors, the former in January and the latter in May. Every month both the superintendent and the principal include student accomplishments and milestones as part of their respective newsletters. Finally, several local newspapers regularly highlight student accomplishments. In general, the success of as many students as possible is regularly celebrated at BBHS.

The maintaining of appropriate discipline and decorum throughout the high school begins with the district's core values. Without mutual respect, the effect of policies, rules, and regulations will have little impact. *The first course of action in any disciplinary procedure is education, which reflects the school's expectations for student learning.* When necessary, disciplinary actions look for ways to help the student improve on past behavior. *To this end, administrators and guidance counselors use a conflict resolution model to address issues between students and students and students and faculty.* A sense of trust is evident in lockers without locks, unattended book bags in the halls, open classrooms, clean corridors and bathrooms, no passes for students to use the restrooms or travel the hallways, Senior Open Campus policy, and student-initiated extra

curricular activities. A sense of respect and positive school climate is evident in the data from the 2006-2007 academic years. One student was expelled (the first in 12 years), two 10-day suspensions were given, no fights occurred, and there were 12 incidents of harassing behavior. Of these 12 incidents, 11 were resolved by using the conflict resolution model, with coaching by guidance counselors and the assistant principal. The policies and practices associated with decorum and discipline allow BBHS to provide an education to its students that is free from the distractions that an unsafe environment presents.

The school committee continues to hold the staff and itself to the highest professional standards by both welcoming and encouraging input from staff, students, and community as it deliberates the best course of action for the district. The *Professional Discussions Committee*, made up of teachers and administrators, is a group that reviews policy under consideration by the school committee. While the role of the group is advisory, input is taken seriously with a proposal often being reworked based on the input of its members. Student views are sought through the Student Council, especially on issues that will directly affect students, such as the new extracurricular honor code. An example of the mutual respect that exists among all parties is the manner in which teacher contracts are settled through a collaborative process called Win-Win. For over twenty years, the BB Education Association and the school committee have succeeded in crafting a bargaining agreement within the allotted time prescribed by the process. *The agreement has produced a fair and equitable contract in a way that maintains the positive relationship among all parties.* An example of how decisions and policies support the ongoing work of the district is in the school committee's allocation of funds to support curriculum work and other school improvement initiatives in the summer. Teams working on initiatives give presentations to the school committee on progress, findings, and/or products. Through this process, the school committee remains an active participant in school improvement.

## **LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION STANDARD**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The leadership and organization of Barnacle Bay High School support the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The principal, through participation in district administrative team meetings, helps to set policy for the district and high school. The principal seeks feedback from teachers, in particular through the Learning Area Leader meetings, on the best model for advancing the goals of the school.

The assistant principal, K-12 facilitator of school improvement, and numerous faculty members provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school. The high school's main organizational units in the educational program are the Learning Areas, facilitated by the Learning Area Leaders.

Barnacle Bay High School employs a block schedule that allows for a variety of classroom activities and assessments, as well as extended advisory periods and assemblies. The schedule includes a late start for students once each week so faculty members can work toward school and district goals. Students, parents, and members of the school staff have input into the decision making process. Parent and student input is gathered through surveys, and faculty action teams are formed to make recommendations for improving programs.

One avenue for personalizing student learning occurs through the advisor/advisee program, which has served as a model for other districts. The freshman team and the integration of math and science into one learning area have provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and across departments.

Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated and displayed in award ceremonies throughout the year, on the walls of classrooms, and in display cases in the halls.

The school climate is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive.

The school board supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning by supporting faculty school improvement work in the summer, bargaining in good faith during contract negotiations, and encouraging input from the community.

Leadership and organization at Barnacle Bay are considered one of the school's greatest strengths and when the school's practices are compared to the Leadership and Organization Standard Rating Guide, the school falls in the *exemplary* category.

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION STANDARD

### STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

#### Strengths

- Student, parent, and community input is valued
- Advisory groups, freshman team, and staff foster a personal approach
- Focus on district and school goals
- Students select their own course levels
- Integration of special education with regular education
- Schedule that is flexible and supports learning
- Class size and teacher load in general supports teaching and learning
- Culture of trust in the building and in relationships reflects guiding principles and core values
- Supportive school board that maintains high expectations

#### Needs

- Clarify purpose and increase effectiveness of Learning Area Leader group
- Create formal process for faculty input
- Continue to attempt to balance teacher loads and class sizes to the extent possible
- Create more opportunities for full faculty discussions