

FIVE-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

*NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES*

*COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS*



March 1, 2007

DARIEN, CONNECTICUT

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## INTRODUCTION

In September 2002, the Commission on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEAS&C) granted Darien High School continued accreditation status based upon the report of a team of educators who visited the school on March 3 – 6, 2002. Included in the report were 78 recommendations for school improvement relative to the seven standards of membership in the NEAS&C.

Darien High School filed a special progress report to the Commission by April 1, 2003, regarding the status of progress made on the implementation of 14 specific recommendations in the report. The school indicated the status of each recommendation as:

*Completed*  
*In Progress*  
*Planned for the Future*  
*No Action*  
*Rejected*

Darien High School filed the two-year progress report required of all member schools on progress being made to implement the recommendations with the Commission by October 1, 2004.

Darien High School filed a second special progress report by August 15, 2005 detailing progress made on two specific recommendations.

All schools are required to file a five-year progress report with the Commission that indicates that all valid recommendations have been completed or are in the final stages of implementation. For Darien High School, the Commission also requested details of the implementation of six specific highlighted recommendations.

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## I. RESPONSES TO HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Impact of the implementation of the formal homeroom period that is designed to provide an adult member of the school community in addition to the guidance counselor who serves to personalize each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for learning.*

Response: Darien High School is in its second full year in its new building. The homeroom program has been in operation since the move to the new school. Every incoming freshman is assigned to a homeroom with a teacher that the student will have for the entire four years of high school. All areas of the building which have LCD projectors are used for homerooms in an effort to keep them as small as possible to promote relationships between the teacher and the students. Homeroom sizes range from 8 to 22 students and average around 14 this year. Homerooms are scheduled an average of once every 7 school days, although the frequency varies with need. A typical homeroom runs for 20 minutes, but may be shorter or longer depending upon the program for that homeroom.

### PURPOSE OF HOMEROOMS:

1. To establish a connection between every student and one adult in the building that would prevent students from feeling isolated. Students would have the same homeroom and homeroom teacher for the entire 4 years of high school.
2. To provide a scheduled time for organizational requirements of the guidance and administrative departments that would reduce the number of disruptions to classes.
3. To provide an opportunity to promote school events and activities and create a greater sense of community.
4. To provide general direction for students regarding the overall operation of the school, its activities and programs.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOMEROOM TEACHERS:

1. To disseminate information to students.
2. To establish a relationship with each student.
3. To implement homeroom curriculum programs.
4. To make referrals to other professionals (counselors, social workers, psychologists, administrators) when student problems become apparent.

Establishing relationships between the students and the homeroom teacher has been a challenging aspect of the program. Information about the school and school programs

that is provided in homeroom provides natural points for discussions that build the relationships. For example a homeroom program may be dedicated to the registration process for the next school year, which allows the teacher to have discussions with the students about their educational program. The homeroom committee has also developed specific homerooms that build a sense of team and improve the relationships within the homeroom, for example a very successful Darien High School Trivia Contest was run for which the winning homerooms at each grade level were given a pizza party. Other homeroom topics might include a discussion about a recent rash of thefts in the school or the use of alcohol by students during homecoming week. Teachers are careful to involve all students in these discussions and are able to follow-up with individual students outside of the homeroom period.

Students and parents report that the homerooms are very popular with the students. While a large part of that popularity is attributed to the outstanding student-produced Blue Wave News programming that is a regular part of homeroom, these programs also provide topics for homeroom teachers to interact with students in ways that are relevant and that build the relationships between them.

- ***Discuss the impact of the three committees established to promote social, civic and ethical expectations at the high school.***

Response: For three years lengthy discussions were held about the issue of how to measure the degree of accomplishment of social, civic and ethical expectations that involved all constituencies in the school and the Darien Board of Education. Committees were formed to address specific issues, such as academic integrity. The work of the committees resulted in changes in school regulations.

Despite the successes of the committees, the faculty struggled with finding a way to measure accomplishment of all of the social, civic and ethical expectations. A member of the Darien Board of Education offered an excellent suggestion to accomplish this - survey all students about their degree of compliance with each expectation.

In June of 2006, all students completed an anonymous survey in homeroom about their degree of compliance with the expectations. Students were asked to indicate on the following scale the level at which they met each expectation:

HIGH		MIDDLE		LOW
5	4	3	2	1

Expectations were rewritten in the first person, such as:

The DHS student will:  
Develop positive interpersonal skills  
*I relate to others in a positive manner.*  
Demonstrate self-advocacy  
*I am able to speak or write in defense of myself.*

Demonstrate emotional maturity by seeking support and responding constructively without violence, intimidation and aggression

*I demonstrate emotional maturity by seeking support and responding constructively without violence, intimidation and aggression.*

Survey results were tallied and evaluated by the committee dealing with social, civic and ethical expectations. While results were generally positive, the three expectations on which the students gave themselves the lowest ratings were:

Volunteer for community service

Participate in the democratic process

Adhere to school and state regulations regarding the use of alcohol and other controlled substances.

These areas were translated into three of the school goals for the 2006-2007 school year:

1. *Increase student volunteerism for community service*
2. *Increase student involvement in the democratic process*
3. *Improve student adherence to school and state regulations regarding the use of alcohol and other controlled substances*

At the beginning of the school year these goals were published in the school newsletter, posted on the school's website and included in a school opening presentation by the principal made to the school on the video distribution system in homerooms. Initial planning had occurred in the spring and in the summer. The faculty and administration reviewed school programs that supported these goals. In addition the school's student government organization, Community Council, also developed plans to reach these goals. Supportive programs include:

- An increased emphasis on our Volunteer Day. This year's program involved an assembly to promote volunteerism with a keynote address by Brian Williams of NBC News, followed by a Volunteer Fair at which 48 agencies and organizations in the greater Darien area needing volunteers were present to explain their work to students and to sign students up for volunteering.
- An increase in the number of service activities being run by Community Council including the re-initiation of a recycling program at the school, a food drive, gifts for needy teens, and support for Special Olympics.
- The four grade level classes, clubs, organizations and athletic teams in the school were encouraged to plan additional community service activities.
- The administration strongly supported the Community Council as the appropriate group to represent students about issues in the school and encouraged students to participate in the democratic process by bringing issues and concerns to the administration through their student government organization. The administration worked with the Community Council to find an area for students to store backpacks when using the library/media center and cafeterias and unblocking student access to their personal websites.

- Community Council supported alcohol free activities including a badminton tournament and a dodge ball tournament. Substance free activities during Homecoming Week were increased.
- Senior members of the Community Council instituted an informal campaign urging their classmates and others in the school to not use alcohol at the Homecoming Dance. The dance was attended by over 900 of the school's 1142 students without a single student being caught using alcohol, a record for this event.
- At the urging of parents, in part because of the school's control of the use of alcohol at school functions, two additional school dances were added to the school's calendar this year, bringing the total for the year to seven. To date there has been only one incident involving the use of alcohol at a school dance this year.

The success of these goals will be measured at the end of the school year. Students will be surveyed annually about their level of compliance with the social, civic and ethical expectations and programs will be planned each year to address the weakest areas.

- ***Describe ways in which the review and discussion of student work has impacted curriculum and instruction***

Response: In the science department, teachers meet by subject to assess the results of assignments common to all sections of a given course. For example, all students taking 300 biology are instructed to write a letter to Charles Darwin explaining the sources of variation responsible for fueling natural selection. All 300 biology courses use this assessment and the department members meet to share results. These data are then employed to impact the curriculum by making adjustments to ensure that students are given the appropriate tools to approach such a complex essay. Each year, as a result of the analysis of strengths and weakness in the students' work, the science department updates the curriculum leading up to the assessment.

In the math department, teachers who teach the same course, such as Calculus, Pre-Calculus, Algebra and Geometry share tests, develop joint tests and final exams, and through use of the S-Drive share instructional notes. This has promoted discussion on how students performed on tests or have understood the lesson notes. This discussion has led to modifying instruction to make the material clearer as well as modifying tests to be better assessment instruments.

Beginning in 2005-2006 the 400 American Literature English 10 teachers had students evaluate the books and readings in the course. Each student reads one additional book during the course and a discussion occurs in each class section in which students lobby for their book to be included in the curriculum for the following year. Based upon the discussion, the class votes one reading into the curriculum and removes one book from the course. Students in classes from all three teachers of the course convene during the make-up period of final exams to have a course level discussion of the curricular change

and vote on a final resolution. In order to complete this process, students must understand the objectives of the course and the purpose of the readings. The exercise represents an extremely high level of thinking on the part of the students. This very effective process is being piloted in 300 level English classes during the current school year and is being considered for other classes in the future.

In the American Studies Program, all student writing projects are evaluated by both an English teacher and a history teacher. All of the teams who teach this interdisciplinary course meet weekly to review student work and direct the instruction for the following week. Curricular change also comes out of these discussions.

Every department informally discusses student work to determine the accomplishment of curricular objectives and needed changes in courses.

- ***Cite specific ways in which assessment results/data have been used to inform changes in curriculum and instruction***

Response: As is mentioned below, CAPT scores and standards were used to develop graduation requirements and means of achieving school expectations for student learning. This analysis resulted in a new mathematics course, CAPT Mathematics Workshop and a new focus for the Writers Workshop course. Additionally CAPT results have driven curricular change in appropriate subjects with emphasis placed on items of the test on which students performed poorly in the appropriate grade level curriculum. The science department will carefully consider the results on the current year's CAPT testing, since the content changes for the new test do not align with the present science program at Darien High School.

Practice writing exercises given to all freshmen during CAPT testing and scored by the entire English department faculty during in-service time have resulted in changes in writing instruction in the curriculum.

Standardized department curricula and assessments in math and science courses in the school are used by teachers and department coordinators to influence instruction and curricular changes. The use of the s-drive on the computer to store curriculum, assessments, and instructional materials facilitates data-driven change.

Advanced Placement test scores and information are regularly used to influence curriculum and instruction in these courses.

- ***Develop and implement formal means to evaluate guidance, media, health and special education services***

Response: In the fall of 2005 a permanent Guidance Advisory Council was formed. Membership on the council includes two parents from each of the four grade levels, two

guidance counselors, a school psychologist, a teacher, an assistant principal and two students. Through the Darien High School Parents Association a needs assessment of guidance and student support services was conducted. Four areas of need were identified and sub-committees were formed to address issues. The needs identified included a college handbook, a guidance handbook, communication and volunteers. The four sub-committees have been working diligently. An excellent college handbook was produced. The guidance services handbook will be completed during the current school year. Communications issues have been addressed and improved. A volunteer program was developed in which parents work in the school's College and Career Resource Center alongside counselors who are assigned on a rotating basis. The Guidance Advisory Council is a permanent group at Darien High School who will periodically survey parents and students about the delivery of guidance and special services and make appropriate recommendations for improvements.

The library/media services staff has reinstated a practice during the current school year to survey students and teachers regarding the effectiveness of services offered. The survey has not been taken in the previous two years, but had been administered annually in the past. Results are used to make improvements in the program where necessary, although informal comments indicate that satisfaction is very high with the library/media program, particularly with the curriculum coordination. The library/media center staff reports to the board of education annually. The library is well used by classes in all disciplines as a resource and is the most popular place for students who are not scheduled in class. Typically 75 – 175 students are in the library in any period. In addition, the library staff has instituted a program this year that attaches a librarian to the English department and one to the history department. The librarian attends the assigned department and curriculum meetings in order to provide greater services and coordination of educational resources for teachers and students. This program was a result of the library/media staff's annual year end self assessment during which they determined that the program would benefit from closer contact with the curriculum.

The health program has undergone changes in staffing in the past two years with a new head nurse hired in 2005-2006 and a second full-time nurse added to the high school in 2006-2007. The head nurse's highest priority has been the updating of health practices in the school system to bring them in line with current state regulations. Several initiatives have been reported to the board of education regarding the administration of medications, field trips, athletic physicals, and emergency health and safety procedures. An annual report is presented to the board of education from the health services department. Reports are also submitted to the state as required.

Special education services are regularly evaluated through mandates in state and federal statutes and compliance reviews. Services of the program are informally evaluated by parents, advocates and attorneys who demand that standards written into individual educational plans be met.

- *Submit details of the school's formal plan to ensure that each student is achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning*

Response: Prior to the move to the new school building, the faculty had spent a great deal of in-service and faculty meeting time to review and revise the academic expectations included in the mission statement, to develop rubrics to measure their accomplishment, and to explore the means used to measure student accomplishment of the expectations. Rubrics were distributed to all teachers and are used as a basis for academic skills taught in all classes.

During the period of transition to the new building, the major focus of staff development time shifted to using instructional technology in the classroom, both in designing the configuration for the new building and in instructional uses. The focus on accomplishment of academic expectations was put on hold for a time.

In reconsidering the issue during the current school year, measures of accomplishment of six of the nine expectations have been determined. These are:

1. Read actively and critically for a variety of purposes and 2. Write effectively.

The measure of achievement will be meeting the Response to Literature, Reading for Information and Interdisciplinary Writing standards of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. Students who do not score within the state goal range on the CAPT in these areas in their sophomore year are required to retake the test in their junior year or can demonstrate proficiency in the following ways:

1. Score an 8 or higher on any one of the following subtests: Response to Literature, Interdisciplinary Writing I or Interdisciplinary Writing II
2. Score a 50 on the Writing Test of the PSAT
3. Score a 500 on the Writing section of the SAT

If a student fails to meet these criteria, the student must enroll in Writers Workshop for the fall semester of the senior year, earn a grade of at least a C and pass a Response to Literature test developed by the English Department consistent with the academic standards of the CAPT tests. Students who fail to meet this expectation are given individual tutoring during the second semester to prepare them to take the test again. Beginning with the Class of 2006, all students were required to meet the standards for graduation. All members of the class completed this requirement.

6. Reason effectively and solve problems

The measurement of achievement is to score within the state goal range on the Mathematics part of the CAPT test. Students who do not meet the state goal may demonstrate proficiency by:

1. Scoring a 46 on the Math section of the PSAT
2. Scoring a 520 on the Math section of the SAT

Students who have not demonstrated proficiency must retake the CAPT test in their junior year. A departmentally developed proficiency test that uses concepts consistent

with the CAPT can be taken in June of the junior year to demonstrate proficiency. Students who have still not demonstrated proficiency must take CAPT Mathematics Workshop in their senior year and demonstrate proficiency on the standards in order to graduate. All students in the Class of 2006 met this standard.

7. Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of wellness

The Darien Board of Education is currently considering a proposal from the health and physical education department that will create a Senior Project requirement for all students at Darien High School. The project will have three components:

1. Students will be required to demonstrate a knowledge of fitness and health
2. Students will measure fitness levels and health indicators and develop an individual lifetime exercise plan
3. Students will be required to participate in a community service project or activity

The students will work with physical education teachers on the Senior Project and will be required to pass the project in order to graduate.

3. Speak effectively and 9. Analyze problems from multiple perspectives by understanding past and present cultures

Accomplishment of these expectations will be measured through successful completion of the required culminating project in World Literature Seminar, the required senior English course. Students work independently to study an issue or problem through reading of a work of non-Western literature and making an oral or video presentation to the class. Teachers use the rubrics developed for the academic expectations to evaluate the presentation. All students must successfully complete this project in order to graduate from Darien High School.

While skills are taught across the curriculum for the remaining three academic expectations, measures of achievement for all students have yet to be developed. These are:

4. Listen actively and critically

5. Access and evaluate multi-media and print information efficiently and critically

8. Demonstrate the skills and real-world contextual knowledge to meet the demands of a changing world

## II. RESPONSES TO EACH RECOMMENDATION IN THE REPORT

### STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: *Mission and Expectations*

1. *Develop and implement a process for regular review of the mission and expectations for student learning to assure that they are current with student needs and community beliefs and values about student learning*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: The faculty did extensive work during in-service programs and at faculty meetings on the mission and expectations for student learning in the first two years following the report. The result was that the student learning expectations were revised on two occasions and reduced to the existing nine expectations in 2004.

Under the leadership of the principal, the departmental council regularly discusses and evaluates the mission and expectations. This forum has assumed responsibility for their review. Proposed changes and updates on implementation policies are then communicated to the full faculty for discussion and final resolution.

2. *Identify and collect assessment data to use as the basis of an ongoing review and revision of the mission and expectations for student learning*

**Classification:** *In progress*

Response: See highlighted recommendations

3. *Identify formal policies and informal programs and practices within the school and community that align with the social, civic and ethical expectations for students*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: See highlighted recommendations

4. *Identify and collect assessment data that demonstrate student progress in meeting the social, civic, and ethical expectations for students*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: See highlighted recommendations

5. *Define the common goals and desired outcomes of the “Looking to the Future” report, the mission and expectations for student learning document, and the district-wide “Continuous Improvement” initiative*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The special progress report filed on March 20, 2003, detailed the in-service program and follow-up activities that related to the completion of this goal prior to the move from the old building to our present building.

6. *Direct immediate efforts to making sure that teachers and administrators understand the relationships among implementing “Looking to the Future,” expectations-based education, and the “Continuous Improvement” project*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The special progress report filed on March 20, 2003, detailed the in-service program and follow-up activities that related to the completion of this goal prior to the move from the old building to our present building.

7. *Develop a separate document that defines the school’s academic expectations for student learning in specific, measurable ways, that describes the levels of performance, and that designates which level is the indicator of successful accomplishment*

**Classification: In progress**

Response: See highlighted recommendations

8. *Institute the practice of using the mission and expectations for student learning as the guide for all procedures, policies, and decisions of the school*

**Classification: In progress**

Response: The mission and expectations for student learning are displayed throughout the school and are included in all publications are used in processes for curriculum development and instructional supervision. They are considered when making any decision of the school that relates to them.

## STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: Curriculum

1. *Design and implement a plan to educate the faculty about the direct relationship between the July 2001 mission and expectations for student learning and the curriculum work initiated by central office*

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: This issue was addressed in previous reports. Adherence to the mission and expectations is included in the template for all curriculum work. The section on standards of the format includes a description of how the curriculum aligns with the mission and expectations. Also, in the past five years, all curriculum proposals have been initiated at the building level, none have been initiated by central office.

2. *Provide time, building-based leadership, and organization for teachers to rethink and rewrite curriculum guides*

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: Curriculum work is an ongoing process at Darien High School. Compensated time in the summer and during the school year have been provided for curriculum development. Each department is also represented on the school's curriculum council.

As is mentioned in the response to other recommendations, the science and mathematics departments have written most of their course curricula onto an s-drive and stored it electronically. The curricula include objectives, suggested methods and learning activities, and learning materials and instructional resources. These curricula are dynamic and under constant revision.

3. *Include professional growth in the curriculum initiative so all teachers will understand the extent to which the curriculum directs teaching beyond content to include instructional strategies, student activities, and assessment techniques*

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: The written curriculum format includes learning standards, content, skills, vocabulary, instructional strategies, learning activities, materials and assessment strategies for all curricula. Professional development programs in the current school year have been entirely department based and have focused on curriculum and instruction in that area.

The science department has piloted a model in which the department's curriculum has been put on an "s-drive" in the district's computer system. Science teachers only have access to learning materials, activities, labs and assessments for each course, evaluate them and their needs when planning lessons and units, and update the curriculum regularly in a continuous and ongoing way. Since all teachers have access to updated technology in the classroom, the use of this curriculum is convenient and easy for all teachers. The mathematics department is currently adopting the model and will have nearly all of the mathematics course curricula on the s-drive by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. Some individual courses are being done in this way for the other academic departments. The remaining academic departments will be developing a similar sharing of curriculum support materials in the next few years.

4. *Identify the academic expectations that are the responsibility of each curriculum area and include specific learning expectations in curriculum documents*

**Classification:** *In progress*

Response: See highlighted recommendations

5. *Ensure that curriculum aligns with the school's academic expectations for student learning*

**Classification:** *In progress*

Response: As has been previously noted the curriculum template includes alignment with the academic expectations for student learning. Some of the academic expectations are strongly supported in the curricular programs as indicated in the highlighted recommendations. The remaining expectations need more curricular support and clearly measurable learning outcomes for each student.

6. *Coordinate interdisciplinary curriculum work among subject area departments to implement the interdisciplinary approaches set forth in "Looking to the Future"*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: Strong interdisciplinary connections exist in those areas in which interest has been expressed by faculty. The Grade 10 American Studies program is perhaps the strongest connection between departments. The technology

education department continues to make interdisciplinary units possible with science, math and other departments on a project basis.

The school's China programs are the result of interdisciplinary cooperation. The China Exchange program is run by teachers from the English and history departments. It has recently expanded to include two sister schools in China, Shanghai No.3 Girls Middle School and Qingdao No. 58 Middle School. In addition to English and history, teachers from the foreign language, physical education, and technology education departments have gone to China with groups of students. An exchange teacher program with the Qingdao school involved biology teachers. A pilot course in the Chinese language is planned for the fall of 2007 and involves the cooperation of a history teacher with the foreign language department. One of the science teachers is also expected to become involved with the teaching of Mandarin at Darien High School in the future.

The learning connections rooms that are available to students during the school day also promote more interdepartmental cooperation. Teachers of history and English and of math and science find collaboration easier and more convenient. Focuses on particular periods or topics in the music and art departments have also led to more connections with other disciplines.

All interdisciplinary efforts from departments have been supported and will be encouraged in the future.

- 7. Identify the criteria used to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to practice and achieve each of the school's academic expectations for student learning***

**Classification: *In progress***

Response: See highlighted recommendations

- 8. Review and revise the curriculum for 300 and 200 level courses to ensure that content is appropriately rigorous and consistent for all students***

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: Curriculum templates have been developed for all levels of curriculum in the past five years, including 200 and 300 level courses. These include examinations of the level of rigor in these courses and consistent approaches to curriculum. Also professional development programs for both staff and administration relating to instructional improvement have focused on academic challenge and demand. The main focus of the district's professional development work with administrators, supervisors and evaluators has been on increasing

academic demand in the classroom at all levels of instruction. The classroom observation form includes the following categories to be addressed:

- Content: What is the level of cognitive demand of the lesson?
- Student Work: What is the level and quality in response to instruction?  
What is the level of student engagement?  
What is the level of discourse?
- Assessment: How is assessment used to inform instruction?

***9. Conduct a needs assessment to identify the need for additional courses, in what subject area they are needed, and for which students they should be designated and add appropriate courses to the program of studies***

***Classification: Completed***

Response: In the spring of 2006, the curriculum council conducted a needs assessment of all students in homeroom regarding the entire curriculum and the students' perceived needs for additional courses or areas of instruction. This data is being used to guide the future direction of curriculum proposals at Darien High School, along with needs identified by teachers and departments.

***10. Modify the time line for adoption of new courses by the curriculum council to ensure timely implementation***

***Classification: Rejected***

Response: After consideration of this issue the curriculum council reaffirmed its support for the current timelines in 2003. Pilot programs can be initiated, e.g. the Mandarin Chinese course when it is determined that the process needs to be accelerated.

***11. Design and implement formal programs for students to extend their learning beyond the school campus***

***Classification: Completed***

Response: Students can extend their learning beyond the school campus in the following courses and programs:

- Authentic Science Research
- Work-Study: Career Exploration 1
- IDEA Gifted and Talented Program
- Norwalk Center for Global Studies
- Border Crossing
- Stamford Arts Magnet School

- Stamford Regional Technical School
- Independent Study
- ALP
- Special Education

***12. Design and implement a building-based structure that provides the necessary time and qualified personnel for on-going curriculum coordination, evaluation, and articulation between departments and schools***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: Previous responses outline the many curriculum development projects and curriculum coordination efforts that have occurred within Darien High School in the past three years. Curriculum coordination and evaluation are the responsibility of individual department coordinators under the direction of the principal and the assistant superintendent for secondary schools. Time, either release from a class period or from duty assignments, provided for teacher coaching to assist with the development of non-tenured teachers has also provided department coordinators with more time for curriculum work. The curriculum council serves to provide some coordination and evaluation of curriculum. Summer time and additional time during the school year are also funded for work in this area.

Professional development time has been used for meetings with teachers from the middle school and high school levels in some curricular areas to improve articulation of curriculum. This has proven to be especially helpful in the mathematics department and in with reading and writing skill development. The district participates in the Tri-State Consortium which evaluates programs across the entire school district. However, articulation of curriculum has been done in only a few learning areas and no formal district plan for K-12 articulation in all curricular areas is in place.

***13. Allocate sufficient resources to assure the effective and timely implementation of the curriculum project initiated this year that will move the school forward in meeting its mission and expectations for student learning***

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: The curriculum project has been fully implemented. During the 2002-2003 school year curriculum development resources supported the writing of the following curricula:

- Algebra I
- Geometry
- Algebra II

- Principles of Mathematics
- Pre-Calculus
- Probability and Statistics
- Video Production
- Earth Science
- In addition there were three academic initiatives supported by curriculum funds as well, including:
- Re-examination of AP Admissions Criteria
- Addition of Graduation Performance Standards for reading, writing, and mathematics
- Establishing a district-wide plan for revision of all curricula for grades K – 12 on a five-year rotating basis.

For the 2003-2004 school year the following projects were completed:

- Writing of curriculum guides for the 4 math courses not done in 2002-03.
- Writing of the first 7 English department curriculum guides.
- Writing of 2 curriculum guides for new course offerings in AP Environmental Science and Art History.
- Finally, in the 2003-2004 recommended budget we have financial support for a variety of other initiatives:
- Summer project centered on articulating high school mission and expectations standards.
- Summer project on developing instructional applications for and assessments of standards.
- Summer project to examine best practices of high school program delivery and scheduling models.
- Convening of the K-12 Library Media Committee to review the coordination of programs and services in the high school, middle school, and elementary schools.
- Continuation of the K-12 Technology Committee to prepare an updated five year instructional technology plan for the years 2003-2008

For 2004-2005 the following curricula were written:

- English 9 Accelerated
- English 10 Honors
- World Literature 300
- Introduction to Journalism

2005-2006 funded projects included:

- Geometry 300
- CAPT Applied Mathematics Workshop
- American Literature 200
- American Literature 300

- Choral Music 6 -12
- String Instrumental Music 3-12
- Biology 200
- Biology 300
- Biology 400
- Marine Science
- Health Education K-12

Projects being done in the 2006-2007 school year are:

- Western Civilization
- American History
- Chemistry 300
- Physics 300
- Physics 400
- Critical Approaches to Film Media
- Spanish 1A/1B
- Music Technology

***14. Include a review and analysis of all levels of student work in the on-going review and evaluation of curriculum***

**Classification: *In progress***

Response: A review and analysis of student work is included in curriculum evaluation in various department areas. Examples are detailed in other responses to recommendations in this report.

**STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: Instruction**

***1. Ensure that instruction aligns with the school's expectations for student learning through professional growth activities that furthers teacher understanding of expectations-based education***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: A major focus of professional growth activities in the past few years has been on expectations-based education. Curriculum work and the teacher evaluation plan have also strongly supported movement in this direction.

Professional development time for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years focused primarily on the move to the new building, utilizing the technology in the

new building and adjustment issues. The main focus on of professional development for the 2006-2007 school year has been on specific departmental needs including instructional strategies and expectations-based education.

2. *Provide professional development and support to ensure that all teachers deliver instruction that personalizes learning, makes connections across disciplines, engages students as active-learners, and involves all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As was previously mentioned, the curriculum that has been written over the past five years has focused on many of these areas and they are included in the template for curriculum. The teacher evaluation instruments and classroom observation forms focus on higher order thinking and engaging students as active learners. The intense discussions about the use of technology in the classroom and professional development time dedicated to technology have also focused on student learning and promoting greater depth of understanding for students through the use of technology. Many interdisciplinary connections exist within the curriculum.

These areas will continue to be of great interest to all professional development work that is done in the future at Darien High School.

3. *Expand technology training programs and opportunities to assure that all teachers are able to use technology as an integral part of instruction*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: Using technology as an integral part of instruction was a main priority for the first two years of operation of the new Darien High School building. In 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 a district committee that studied the use of technology in the classroom included strong representation from Darien High School.

In the spring of 2004 a technology consultant was hired to examine and report on the present and potential use of technology for instruction at Darien High School. The consultant's report focused on five areas of recommendations:

- *Increased access to computers*
- *Video display and distribution*
- *Subject specific technologies*
- *Professional development for faculty in the use of technology*
- *Increased technical support services for technology*

In order to implement the findings of the report, a building level technology committee worked for two years with input from the entire faculty to plan for the use of technology for instruction. The plan included having an LCD projector in each classroom that is hard-wired to a desktop personal computer to connect it to the data and video distribution systems in the building. Each classroom teacher has a tablet pc which serves as an instructional tool and as the teacher's administrative use computer. The tablet functions as a Smart Board and interacts wirelessly with the LCD projector. This enables the teacher to bring lesson plans into the classroom that include graphics, pictures and video on the tablet and to seamlessly call up the internet, data bases, live television or stored video. The teachers also save work done in the class and download it to their web pages to be reviewed by students from their home computers or by absent students. When the building committee's budget was unable to provide funding for instructional technology for the classrooms, the town appropriated in the 2005-2006 operating budget of the Darien Public Schools an additional \$985,000 specifically earmarked to put instructional technology in the classrooms of Darien High School.

Nancy Cetorelli, the retiring Director of Cooperative Educational Services on a recent visit commented that Darien High School should be the national model for the use of educational technology and that every student should have access to similar technologies.

**4. *Increase opportunities for all students to assess their own learning***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: The English department has included a process-writing piece in many course curricula. Students complete a metacognitive evaluation of their essays and other assignments in which they not only examine the content of the paper, but also their writing process. These process pieces are then discussed with the entire class to help students improve their ability to analyze their work with a focus on the process of writing.

Other departments require student self-assessment of work, but a formal school-wide program has yet to be adopted.

**5. *Establish a formal process for students and parents to give feedback to teachers and to the school about instruction***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: Students are given course evaluation forms at the end of the course throughout the school. These are then used by teachers to assess their

effectiveness and to make adjustments in instruction in the future. Some individual teachers solicit feedback from students during the course.

No program has been developed to regularly solicit feedback from parents regarding instructional practices. Parent feedback is an important part of some programs, e.g. the Darien China Exchange.

**6. *Review and evaluate feedback from students and parents to identify areas for improvement and instructional practices that need explanation***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As described in the above response, feedback from students on instructional practices is considered and utilized to make decisions about instruction. In informal surveys of college graduates who return to the school, many report that they are bored at the college level since many college professors continue to use lecture or lecture/discussion as a primary means of instructing. Darien High School graduates are more accustomed to greater involvement in their learning and the extensive use of technology for instruction.

**7. *Institute a school-wide practice of reviewing student work to assess the effectiveness of instruction in meeting the school's expectations for student learning***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: See highlighted recommendations

**8. *Devote time during regular department meetings to the discussion of student work and assessment data as it relates to instruction***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: Time has been provided at department meetings in English, math, science and social studies to discuss student work and assessment data. All departments discuss standardized test results, particularly the CAPT, and how these relate to curriculum and instruction. English and social studies departments discuss student written work and the instructional implications of the work. Mathematics teachers have discussed topics related to instruction, such as student work on word problems, and developed instructional practices to improve in this area.

9. *Analyze the systems in place to identify resources needed for effective supervision and evaluation of instruction in all subject area departments and for all teachers*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: Completion of this recommendation was explained in the two-year report. The revised Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan was a result of analysis done by a district-wide committee of teachers and administrators to improve supervision and evaluation. Workshops including those conducted by Dr. Richard Elmore with administrators and department coordinators focused on improved supervision and evaluation in the school. The work of the Instructional Leadership Team has been focused primarily on this area for the past five years. The superintendent of schools has established supervision and instruction as a very high priority for the district. Teachers have had input into the supervision process that has helped to create clearer understandings of expectations about supervision and instruction on the part of both teachers and evaluators. The teacher coaching model in use has greatly increased supervisory support for non-tenured teachers. Expanding the roles of district coordinators has also created a new emphasis on supervision and evaluation for many departments.

10. *Provide adequate resources in the form of time and qualified personnel to implement the teacher evaluation and professional development plan recently adopted*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: As mentioned above, the teacher coaching program has increased supervision in the classroom and improved instruction.

An additional assistant principal was added to the school for the 2005-2006 school year. Also an additional special education coordinator was added in the 2004-2005 school year with added evaluative responsibilities for special education classroom teachers at the high school. The district-wide coordinators of athletics, health and physical education and music assume responsibility for supervising and evaluating teachers in those curricular areas.

The four building level administrators have made a strong commitment to implementing the teacher evaluation and supervision plan. The administrative team meets regularly to discuss progress in following the requirements of the plan and how it is being implemented.

11. *Add additional equipment so that all teachers have reliable access to copy services*

**Classification: Completed (and In Progress)**

Response: In the 2003-2004 all new copier equipment was leased for the building. For two years copiers were generally reliable and adequate to meet the needs of teachers. Hence, the recommendation was reported to be completed in the two-year progress report.

However, since the move to the new building an increase in the staff to accommodate enrollment increases has taxed the copiers in the building. Exacerbating this is that the copiers are getting old, nearing the end of the lease. The finance director moved the existing copiers from the old building to the new building with the plan to determine future needs based upon usage. Since the copier lease is up in the current school year, 2006-2007, plans would be for an upgrade and update of copiers in the 2007-2008 school year. Copiers are an ongoing problem that gets resolved but then reemerges as the copiers age.

#### STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: **Assessment of Student Learning**

- 1. Establish department-wide and school-wide indicators of successful accomplishment and levels of performance expectations of student learning in the mission statement*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: Indicators of successful accomplishment and levels of performance expectations of student learning contained in the mission statement were established. However, as is indicated in the highlighted recommendations, these have not been fully implemented and have been changed in some cases.

- 2. Define clearly the expectations for student learning to be measured by all classroom assessment data to be used to make decisions about curriculum review and revision*

**Classification:** *In Progress*

Response: Curriculum documents include clear expectations for student learning in all areas and means of measuring them. The documents are available to students and parents on the school's website. Since most academic courses have been written into the new curriculum templates, good progress has been made on this recommendation.

- 3. Develop, implement, and support a process for the routine collection of assessment data to be used to make decisions about curriculum review and revision*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As has been previously mentioned, assessment data from standardized tests is used in the process of curriculum review and revision. Departments are also developing standardized assessments for students at the end of the course, which are then examined in the curriculum review process. This process is complete for math and science, and at various stages in the other departments.

- 4. Develop, implement, and support the practice of individual teachers and subject area departments using assessment data to determine the effectiveness of instruction*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As mentioned above departments are developing standard assessments to inform curricular decisions. In addition teachers have professional goals related to the elements of effective instruction that include assessment of student work as a means of improving instruction as part of the teacher evaluation program. The intense focus on evaluating student work done in the Instructional Leadership Team meetings by administrators had lead to much work with teachers on using assessment to effect instruction.

Departments also spend much time evaluating assessment data and discussing student work at department meetings and in professional development programs.

- 5. Identify the specific skills and knowledge relating to assessment that are needed within the school and provide professional development opportunities designed to meet those needs*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: The skill related to assessment that has been identified as a priority is examining the level of student work. Some departments have devoted professional development programs to improve teacher skills in this area. For example, the English department spends a day grading practice essays that Grade 9 students take during CAPT testing to determine needs for instruction. Teachers new to the department become proficient in assessing essays through this exercise, the coaching of the teacher-coach, and department discussions. Discussions to help standardize assessment practices within the department and to

improve instruction in the department have been held in nearly all curricular areas.

**6. *Develop and implement a long-term plan to support and monitor all aspects of assessment practices within the school***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As has been mentioned, the teacher evaluation plan supports and monitors assessment practices in the school. Individual departments are also focusing on assessment of student work and results of standardized testing both locally developed and outside of the school to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction. Assessment will be a continuing focus at Darien High School for the immediate and long-term. A formal program to coordinate assessment practices has yet to be developed.

**7. *Identify and collect school-based assessment data that show student success in meeting the expectations for learning and report this data to the public***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: During the current school year all teachers were required to use IG Pro Gradebook. A pilot program had been developed using Parent Connect software that would improve communication between parents and teachers regarding individual student progress and meeting expectations for learning. Some staff continue to use Parent Connect, while others utilize direct contact features of the IG Pro Gradebook to keep parents well-informed. In 2007-2008 the school will make all reports to parents electronically, except for the very few parents who do not have email.

Data about collective school progress is reported to the public through press releases, the school's website, the principal's newsletter, reports to the board of education, and on community access television which originates from the school's television studio.

**8. *Identify and collect data that assesses the extent to which students meet the school's social and civic expectations for students and report this data to the public***

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: See highlighted recommendations.

## STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: Leadership and Organization

1. *Utilize the revived faculty council to give teachers a voice in the decision-making process of the school*

### **Classification: Completed**

The faculty council meets monthly with the principal and as necessary to establish mutually agreeable procedures to insure communication and site-based decision-making. The principal usually attends a portion of each meeting of the faculty council to address and listen to concerns. A three-part structure is used to monitor and report on the progress of concerns that are raised at the meeting. The chair of the faculty council sends the minutes of each meeting including the 3-part report to each member of the faculty. Other committees have also given the faculty a voice in the decision-making process. The faculty council regularly surveys the faculty on issues of concern to teachers and communicates these to the principal and/or other administrators. It is the perception of both faculty and administration that effective communication exists between these two groups.

2. *Empower and encourage the autonomy and authority of the principal to lead the school in meeting the mission and expectations for student learning*

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: The present Darien High School principal was hired in July of 2002. The perception of the principal is that he has been given sufficient authority to lead the school in meeting its mission and expectations for student learning. The board of education and central office administration have been extremely supportive of budget requests and initiatives recommended by the principal. The philosophy of the principal has been to involve as many constituencies as possible in the decision-making process. In addition to faculty and staff, students and parents have been included in school improvement and in the successful transition to the new school building. The principal has been greatly supported in having autonomy and authority.

3. *Establish effective communication between the administration and faculty that is clear, honest, and frequent during all aspects of decision-making*

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: See recommendation 1 above.

Additionally, the principal solicits feedback from each teacher at the end of each school year on the effectiveness of the school administration. Teachers have the

choice of submitting the evaluation anonymously. In the past four years, the feedback regarding the openness and degree of honesty of the administration has been very positive. It is the perception of both the faculty and the administration that a high level of trust has been established between these two groups.

4. *Commit the necessary resources to assure leadership and organization for effective coordination and supervision of curriculum and instruction*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: Resources for these areas are detailed in the curriculum and instruction standards above.

5. *Examine the school's rationale for ability grouping to ensure it is current with educational research and consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: As was previously mentioned in this report, the faculty did a review of the rationale for ability grouping and determined that the present structure best met the educational needs of the Darien High School students.

6. *Evaluate the criteria for placement in 400 level courses to assure that all qualified and interested students have equal access*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The English, mathematics, science and social studies departments have reviewed their criteria for placement in 400 level courses. Guidelines for placement include analysis of test scores, grades, and teacher recommendations. Procedures have been established that allow students to take placement tests if they are not initially accepted into 400 level courses.

In an effort to allow a greater number of interested students to take 400 level courses, several new courses have been introduced into the curriculum in the past three years. These include: AP Environmental Studies, 400 Honors Earth Science, and AP Music Theory. These have increased the number of students in this level. In addition more students are meeting the qualifications for placement in 400 level courses. Evidence of this is that the number of AP tests taken in the school has nearly doubled in the past three years from 192 in 2001 to 351 in 2006. Despite this increase in the number of tests taken, scores have increased. For the Class of 2006, 52% of the graduates achieved a score of 3 or better on one or more AP exams, with 26% earning some designation as AP Scholar or above.

7. *Establish consistent standards for 300 level courses*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: The implementation of the curriculum format has served to develop more consistent standards for courses at all levels of instruction. The process developed will ensure that all curricula have consistent standards. Many of the other initiatives already described in this report, including improved supervision and evaluation, the focus on assessing student work, various in-service programs and using standardized test results have all contributed to more consistent standards.

8. *Identify criteria that measure achievement in 300 level courses and monitor results to assure ongoing consistency*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: Criteria for measuring achievement are included in the curriculum development process. Consistency has been greatly improved in departments to varying degrees. The math and science departments have well-developed measures of consistency. Although much progress has been made, more work is needed in the humanities and foreign language departments.

9. *Include teachers in all aspects of planning for and implementing a revised schedule*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: A committee of teachers, students and administrators worked for two years on the revised schedule for Darien High School. Their progress was regularly reported to the faculty at faculty meetings and on professional days. The end result, after much debate, was a schedule that very much resembled the former one, but that everyone agreed was in the best interest of student learning at Darien High School.

10. *Prepare teachers for innovations and revisions in instructional strategies necessitated by a newly configured schedule*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: The newly configured schedule was not greatly reconfigured. The changes required in instructional strategies related more to the emphasis on increased use of technology in the classroom in the new Darien High School. Professional development activities to assist teachers were the major emphasis for the staff during the first two years of operation in the new building. Teachers use technology in the classroom regularly.

**11. *Establish a specific process and means for parents to have a meaningful role in decision-making within the school***

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: Parents were represented on the school atmosphere committee that developed plans for the operation of the new school. Parents served on an academic integrity committee that addressed the issue of cheating at Darien High School. Two parents now have permanent seats on the curriculum council, one of whom has made significant contributions to the work of the council. Two parents are also members of the community council, the student government organization. Parents are active members of the school beautification committee that is in the process of relocating art and memorial work from the old building and makes decisions about the aesthetics of the new building.

Parents play a very important role in the support of extra-curricular programs, especially athletics. The Blue Wave Pride Club has recently been reorganized to ensure more accountability and an equitable distribution of funds. Two different parent and citizen committees raised funds for two separate projects to put the latest artificial turf on athletic fields, each raised around \$750,000. Parental support for all activities is amazing and parents have very strong role in these groups.

A guidance advisory committee was established last year in which parents play the major role in helping to provide positive direction for the guidance program. Parent volunteers have organized and operated a highly successful college and career development program called "I-Zone."

The principal meets at least monthly with the Darien High School Parents Association Co-Presidents who provide him with input from parents and advocate for the parents position. Open and honest dialogue in this forum has led to changes in school operation and greatly influenced decisions of the principal. The budget support group of the DHSPA also has a strong influence on important budget decisions, working together with the school administration.

**12. *Involve student organizations in creating an atmosphere that values and supports respectful interaction***

**Classification: *Completed***

**Response:** Students were very actively involved in the work of the School Atmosphere Committee that developed the Code of the Halls and realigned cafeteria structure. These efforts have created a more positive and respectful environment within the old school and provided a basis for positive expectations for student behavior in the new building.

Students have also initiated an annual Black History Day assembly program that helps to promote positive interaction and respect. A student-initiated Gay Straight Alliance promotes tolerance and respect through its annual participation in the National Day of Silence. Students also play a major role in organizing and running the annual DIVE Day (Darlen Initiative to Value Each Other).

The building has a student activities room that is dedicated to use for students who are involved in community council and classes. This attractive space prominently located in the building adds increased status and importance to the work of the student government, which strives to promote respectful interaction. The community council has played a major role in the program to help meet the three identified areas of social, civic and ethical expectations this year. The community council has also advocated for students and done much to promote school spirit this year, in addition to increasing support for more community service and charitable activities.

13. ***Monitor student interactions and respond to inappropriate behaviors as they occur***

**Classification: *Completed***

**Response:** The work of the School Atmosphere Committee set a positive expectation for student behavior at Darien High School. Teachers report in the end of the year administrative assessment that they feel generally well supported by administrators in dealing with student behavior issues.

Darien High School students have generally been very well behaved in the new building, showing great respect for the building and pride in their school. The initial concerns expressed by teachers about having to do duties that monitor student behavior have not been a major issue. All teachers do duty. The four administrators monitor student behavior in the cafeteria during all three lunches on a daily basis. A fourth campus monitor was added to the new building and helps to provide adequate supervisory coverage. The programs previously mentioned to promote tolerance and understanding have helped to create positive student interactions. While some problems exist with student behavior, they are relatively minor when compared to other schools or to the past. The best example

of this is that there has not been a single physical altercation between two students in the nearly two years of operation in the new building. New teachers express shock and amazement that at the end of nearly every lesson, students say “thank you” to the teacher as they leave the room.

#### STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: **School Resources for Learning**

1. *Arrange for regularly scheduled time for support services staff, special education teachers, and the regular education teachers to plan and confer*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: A student support team that includes support services staff, administrators and teachers meets regularly to discuss students who are not being successful either academically or socially in the school. This team works with parents to identify strategies to improve student performance.

A co-teaching model was implemented in 2003 that promotes inclusion of special education students in regular education classes thereby greatly increasing interactions between special education and regular education teachers. Student support staff members are also included in planning for team co-teaching. This plan was phased in over four years and will include all four grade levels in the next school year. It is felt that this will greatly relieve communication problems between regular and special education teachers.

Professional development programs to better educate regular education teachers about the changing landscape of special education have also been conducted and are planned for the future.

2. *Include guidance counselors and the department coordinator in all curriculum work*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: The Director of Guidance meets regularly with department coordinators through the departmental council and communicates regularly with them regarding curriculum. The director also works closely with department coordinators on scheduling issues that sometimes relate to curriculum. A member of the guidance department is a permanent member of the curriculum council.

Department coordinators have been very involved in the curriculum development process. The process was recently changed so that any proposals made to the

curriculum council must first be passed through the department and the department coordinator. Department coordinators also provide leadership for curriculum development and initiation for their departments and have responsibility for professional development programs.

3. *Expand student support services to include career counseling*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: Through the efforts of volunteer parents working cooperatively with the guidance and other departments, an excellent college and career program has been developed at Darien High School. The “I-Zone” is in its third year of operation. During the spring for a period of 4 – 6 weeks, every Tuesday is college day and every Thursday is career day in the I-Zone. Students are invited to participate in the programs which are run during lunch periods and involve outside speakers or DHS staff members on topics of interest to students. College topics include searching for a college, filling out an application, interviewing, building a resume, financial aid and planning, portfolios, etc. The college programs are strongly encouraged for juniors with interested sophomores also invited. Programs are held in various locations, depending upon the perceived interest in the topic.

Career topics are based upon student surveys and include areas such as the legal profession, marketing, business, health related careers, etc. Career clusters are included on a rotating basis, so that all general areas are covered during a student’s four years in high school. Career programs are open to all four grade levels. When careers are related to particular departments in the school, e.g. journalism and English classes, the programs are promoted in the classroom. The I-Zone program has a strong marketing effort with posters throughout the building, promos on the Blue Wave News television programs, and information on the school’s website, in school publications and on the DHSPA email “Blast” that is weekly sent to parents. Refreshments are provided and students have chances to win gift certificates for “I-Tunes” for attending the sessions.

A College and Career Center has also been developed in the school. Located in the main corridor near the library, the center has a wealth of materials about college and careers and has computer programs to explore these areas. The center is staffed by volunteer parents and guidance counselors on a rotating basis. Each junior has a college/career conference with a guidance counselor which ends in the College and Career Center. The school subscribes to Naviance software which provides the student and parent with great access to college and career information. Counselors ensure that the student accesses this valuable resource in the junior year conference. Naviance passwords are issued to students in sophomore year and most students access the site well before the junior year.

4. *Assure equitable guidance counseling services for those students who do not plan to attend a four year college or university*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: As was mentioned in 3 above, the focus of the junior year conference with students and parents is on careers and appropriate college placement. The I-Zone program is designed to meet the needs of all students, not just those attending four-year colleges. Programs available in the College and Career Center are designed to address the needs of all students. The Naviance Program includes a Meyers Briggs Type Indicator survey which is used in helping students explore career areas of interest.

5. *Conduct an assessment of the needs for student support services that are not met through the programs in place*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: The guidance advisory council conducted an survey of parents related to services offered in the guidance program and has developed goals to meet the needs that were determined.

6. *Develop and implement programs and services to meet the identified needs*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: The guidance department is following the recommendations of the guidance advisory council in implementing programs to meet the identified needs.

7. *Publish the activities of and services available through the guidance department in appropriate school publications*

**Classification: *Completed***

Response: Descriptions of guidance services and activities are published in the *Student Handbook*. A monthly guidance column is also published in the *Principal's Newsletter* and posted on the school's website. A parent volunteer working in conjunction with the administrative assistant also produces an e-mail newsletter, *The Blast*, which is sent to around 95% of the students' homes. This has provided instant up-to-date messages and information about programs to parents. The guidance director also communicates to parents and students through the Naviance program which allows any counselor to send emails to any

group of students and parents, including their own counselees. The number of complaints about lack of knowledge of guidance department programs, services and activities has been reduced to almost none.

8. *Publish a list of guidance counselors names and their student assignments in the student handbook*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The list of counselors and their student assignments is published in the monthly newsletter and on the school's website. Since the student handbook is only published once a year, these forums allow for complete and updated information when changes in assignments occur.

9. *Institute a plan such as the proposed student advisory program to assure that each student has an adult member of the school community who serves to personalize that student's educational program*

**Classification: In Progress**

Response: See highlighted recommendations

10. *Make provisions for academic assistance to regular education students in need*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The English/History, math/science and foreign language learning centers are open every period and staffed by members of these departments. Students in need of academic assistance are allowed to go to these areas when not scheduled into classes and receive help.

Teachers are also available for help before and after school and during non-class scheduled periods. Since many students are involved in sports and activities, the before school times seem to work best for extra help. Teachers are very generous in giving of their time to assist students with academic work. Many teachers also go on line at night to assist students with questions and assignments. Some teachers have web pages with class notes and study guides for students.

In addition, the National Honor Society runs a tutorial program for students who are experiencing difficulties. This program is run in the math/science resource center.

The library media center is also open and staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every day. Some students receive academic assistance in this way.

11. *Establish a system for regular, formal evaluation of student support services*

**Classification:** *In Progress*

Response: See highlighted recommendations

12. *Resolve the problems with the newly implemented school management software so the school is able to record, secure, and retrieve student data and print school reports in a timely manner*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: The school has been using the SASI student data management system for the past four years with great success. Any initial problems have been resolved and data management is efficient.

STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION: **Community Resources for Learning**

1. *Define the process whereby interested and qualified students may enroll in courses at institutions of higher learning in the area*

**Classification:** *Rejected*

Response: Students working on independent projects, particularly with the Authentic Science Research course regularly interact with college professors about their work. The school is not aware of any need or demand for students to enroll at institutions of higher learning in the area.

2. *Publicize opportunities available and the process for students to enroll in courses off campus and include this information in the program of studies*

**Classification:** *Completed*

Response: This information is included in the *Program of Studies*.

3. *Conduct a needs assessment to determine how and in what manner school to career opportunities would augment and enhance learning for students*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The needs assessment and follow-up programs are described in 3 under *School Resources for Learning*

4. *Design and implement school to career programs according to the needs identified*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The program is detailed in 3 under *School Resources for Learning*

5. *Pursue formal partnerships with community business, industry, and social agencies that allow for job shadowing, internships, and apprentice opportunities for students*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: This objective has been met in a variety of ways. Special education students who will not enroll in four-year college programs have formal plans for post-graduation work included in their I.E.P.s. Alternative Learning Program students are given direct assistance in finding jobs that are possible career opportunities for them. The Authentic Science Research and independent study programs often set up students with internship and career related opportunities outside of the school. The Volunteer Fair also creates many opportunities for students to work in areas of career interest.

6. *Prioritize the design components of the new school that are essential to fulfilling the vision set forth in “Looking to the Future”*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: This has been accomplished prior to the move to the new school and is no longer an issue.

7. *Institute a plan for routine custodial care and maintenance of the building over the next four years*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: This has been accomplished prior to the move to the new school and is no longer an issue. Custodial care and maintenance in the new facility has been excellent.

8. *Commit resources in the form of sufficient funding, organization, leadership, and staff to protect the safety, health and comfort of all who work and learn in the present building*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: As previously mentioned, custodial care and maintenance in the new facility has been excellent. The district is in the process of implementing a new security plan for the fall of 2007 that will provide better monitoring of the campus and restrict access to the extent possible without changing the positive, open atmosphere of the campus. A fourth campus monitor was added after the move to the new school. A second full-time nurse was added during the 2006-2007 school year. The administration and police continue to work cooperatively in an ongoing manner on any issues of safety, e.g. traffic issues. The resources are in place to deal with any situations that arise.

9. *Correct all conditions that deny the facility full compliance with safety and health regulations*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: This has been accomplished prior to the move to the new school and is no longer an issue. The new building is fully up to all codes.

10. *Allocate sufficient and dependable funds to assure that copy services for the faulty and staff are available at all times*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: See 11 under *Instruction Standard*.

11. *Develop and implement schedules for the routine repair and replacement of equipment that supports the educational program of the school*

**Classification: Completed**

Response: This has been accomplished prior to the move to the new school and is no longer an issue.

12. *Update district policies to reflect current laws and practices within the school*

**Classification: *In Progress***

Response: The Darien Board of Education is in the process of updating district policies to reflect current laws and practices within the school. Examples in the past year include a comprehensive wellness policy and the aforementioned security plan.

### **III. SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**

Despite increased enrollment and with projections for increasing enrollment, the Darien community has provided strong support for all needs at Darien High-School. The school has been well-staffed, well-equipped and generally well supported during the past few years. There are no substantive changes to report at this time.

## IV. CURRENT STATEMENT OF MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Darien High School is to nurture the mind, body and spirit of each member of the school community and to encourage the development of all students as reflective thinkers who strive for excellence in their lives. In a rigorous intellectual environment students will develop the skills, values and integrity that will prepare them to become citizens with a commitment to lifelong learning and to lives of vision and consequence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS:** The DHS student will across content areas and in a variety of ways:

1. Read actively and critically for a variety of purposes.
2. Write effectively.
3. Speak effectively.
4. Listen actively and critically.
5. Access and evaluate multi-media and print information efficiently and critically.
6. Reason effectively and solve problems.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of wellness.
8. Demonstrate the skills and real-world contextual knowledge to meet the demands of a changing world.
9. Analyze problems from multiple perspectives by understanding past and present cultures.

**SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS:** The DHS student will:

1. Develop positive interpersonal skills.
2. Demonstrate self-advocacy.
3. Demonstrate emotional maturity by seeking support and responding constructively without violence, intimidation and aggression.
4. Demonstrate self-confidence by setting challenging and appropriate goals, and working towards them.
5. Participate effectively and efficiently in groups to pursue and generate information.
6. Follow school regulations and state and federal laws regarding the use of alcohol and other controlled substances.

**CIVIC EXPECTATIONS: The DHS student will:**

- 1. *Develop a healthy sense of self-worth and the worth of others.***
- 2. *Demonstrate mutual respect for all members of the school and town community.***
- 3. *Interact with and value people of other towns, countries and cultures.***
- 4. *Understand the human impact on the environment.***
- 5. *Volunteer for community service.***
- 6. *Participate in the democratic process.***

**ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS: The DHS student will:**

- 1. *Act responsibly and respectfully toward him/herself and others.***
- 2. *Follow the established rules, guidelines and laws of the school community.***
- 3. *Explore, discuss and question the moral issues that arise within the context of his/her day.***
- 4. *Demonstrate sensitivity to, and respect for, the perspectives, opinions, needs and customs of others.***
- 5. *Use proper citations in the presentation of research and other sources and demonstrate academic integrity in all aspects of his/her work.***

## **V. EXAMPLES OF HOW MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN USED TO GUIDE DECISION MAKING**

1. The curriculum format that is currently being used includes the mission and expectations statement and requires an explanation of how the curriculum relates to the mission and expectations.
2. Rubrics developed for reading, writing, speaking and listening are used in classes across the curriculum to assess student work or to serve as models for the development of other assessment methods.
3. The assessment of student accomplishment of social, civic and ethical expectations drives school goals for the year and provides a focus for growth for all students in this area. This focus has resulted in new programs and changes to existing programs such as DIVE Day, the Darien Initiative to Value Each Other.
4. The expectations for reading, writing and reasoning were coordinated with the state mandated graduation requirements and resulted in the development of a new mathematics course, CAPT Mathematics Workshop, and revisions to the Writers Workshop course in the English department.
5. The expectation about understanding the concepts of wellness has resulted in an extensive revision of the senior year program in health and physical education and a senior project that will serve as a culminating educational experience for students in this area.

## VI. SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- An amazingly bright, talented, considerate, and motivated student body.
- A dedicated and cooperative faculty, highly committed to students and learning.
- A beautiful, well-maintained, well-equipped and functional facility in which all members of the school community take great pride.
- Concerned, active and supportive parents.
- A highly supportive community.
- Continued excellent test scores:

		<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
SAT Verbal		576	577	585	576
Math		595	612	606	603
AP	5	32%	39%	37%	39%
	4	38%	34%	37%	34%
	3	24%	22%	21%	22%
	2	6%	5%	5%	5%
	1	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
CAPT Math		87%*	82%	88%	80%
Reading		84%	85%	77%	74%
Writing		84%	84%	84%	78%
Science		78%	78%	78%	74%

\* percent of grade 10 students scoring at or above state goal

- 52% of the Class of 2006 earned a 3 or better on one or more AP exam. For 2006, 25 DHS students were designated AP Scholars, 15 were AP Scholars with Honor, 25 earned AP Scholars with Distinction designation and one was a National AP Scholar. Sixty-one of these students were seniors representing 26% of the Class of 2006.
- In 2005, Pepsi Cola Corporation initiated sponsorship of an award for the school in the Fairfield County Interscholastic Conference that scored the most points based upon winning record, league championships, state championships, sportsmanship and athletic policies. Despite being the 3<sup>rd</sup> smallest school of the 19 members, Darien High School has won the Pepsi Cup in both of its first two years.

- Students in technology education during the past four years have designed and built a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle, then redesigned it into a hybrid vehicle that achieves speeds of up to 35 mph. They have displayed their work at the state level, in Baltimore, Maryland at a national technology education conference and in Shanghai, China at an International Science Exposition.
- Technology Education teacher Leon Strecker was the 2006 Connecticut winner of the American Star of Teaching Award from the United States Department of Education.
- Donna Russo is the 2007 Connecticut High School Assistant Principal of the Year.
- The school is a model for the use of instructional technology. The classroom configuration was developed by the staff and allows for seamless use of pre-programmed lessons that can integrate data from a variety of sources including the internet and video sources. The more than 800 computers in the building have all been purchased in the past two years. The school has the first installation of a Leicka microscopy lab in a public school in the United States.
- When the baseball field has “Field Turf” installed this spring, the school will have three “Field Turf” fields, two of which were privately funded by donations, each of which cost around \$750,000.
- The school has expanded its initiative to link with schools in China and is currently exchanging students and teachers with Qingdao No. 58 Middle School and Shanghai No. 3 Girls Middle School in alternating school years. A Mandarin Chinese language course will be offered this fall.
- Students participate in many community service and outreach activities including building houses in Bridgeport and Norwalk through Habitat for Humanity, spending vacation time in New Orleans to help rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, and building schools in Africa through Building with Books. At this year’s Volunteer Fair Day that was kicked off by a speech from Brian Williams, 48 different community organizations solicited student volunteers.
- The student operated emergency medical service ambulance squad, Post 53, was featured on the CBS Evening News.
- 2006 Graduate Silvia Puma was a Siemens-Westinghouse Semi-finalist.

## **VII. RESTRUCTURING OR OTHER REFORM INITIATIVES**

There are presently no plans for significant restructuring or reform of Darien High School. The major improvement initiatives for the school are to continue to improve classroom instruction. A teacher coach program has provided good support for teachers new to the building along with bi-monthly instructional seminars that are mandatory for non-tenured teachers. Improving and better supervising classroom instruction is also a major district goal. The high school's efforts are coordinated with the district's program. The professional staff realizes that we have an exceptionally bright and talented student body and continually ask ourselves the question: "How are we adding value to the education of these students?"

The principal is retiring at the end of the current school year. The new principal will likely have new challenges and directions for the school.

## **VIII. DESCRIPTION OF THE FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM**

A committee that consisted of the principal, a library/media specialist who chaired the school's self-study and three teachers were assigned the task of completing the follow-up program. The initial efforts included assigning recommendations to each committee member and determining who would be responsible for the implementation of each recommendation. The committee member then served as a liaison with the people in the school community responsible for that task.

Some of the work involved the entire faculty. Several professional development days were devoted to work on follow-up activities. In the initial two years after receipt of the report a discussion of the follow-up work was a regular agenda item for faculty meetings. In addition the departmental council had a regular agenda item about the follow-up to the accreditation visit. Many decisions about the direction of the follow-up activities were made at the departmental council. Items discussed at the council were then brought to department meetings for discussion and input. The central office professional staff members were involved in the follow-up work, along with students and parents where appropriate. The board of education was given periodic updates to keep them informed of the ongoing progress.

The follow-up committee met monthly for the first two years of implementation, then met less frequently as recommendations were completed. Since many areas of concern were corrected in the move to the new building, full faculty discussion became less frequent. The focus of professional development and school improvement during the move to the new building was on the use of instructional technology and on supervision of classroom instruction. By the time of the transition between buildings, nearly all of the recommendations were either completed or well in progress.

**IX. STATISTICAL DATA SHEET**

**STATISTICAL DATA SHEET**

School Darien High School Principal: Dr. Jerome A. Auclair  
 City, State: Darien, Connecticut School Telephone: (203) 655-3981  
 E-MAIL Address: jauclair@darienps.org FAX Number: (203) 656-3631  
 Dates of Evaluation: March 3 – 6, 2002

Grades: 9 - 12 School Enrollment: 880 at time of the evaluation  
 Grades: 9 - 12 School Enrollment: 1141 at present time

Based upon the state's definition of a dropout, indicate the dropout rate for the most recently completed school year as well as for the preceding two years:

0 %      20 05-2006  
0.2 %      20 04-2005  
0.7 %      20 03-2004

**DISPOSITION OF ALL VISITING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

	Two-Year Report		Five-Year Report	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>COMPLETED</b>	22	28%	47	60%
<b>IN PROGRESS</b>	43	55%	29	37%
<b>PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE</b>	7	9%	0	0%
<b>REJECTED</b>	2	3%	2	3%
<b>NO ACTION</b>	4	5%	0	0%
	*		*	
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*The totals should reflect the number of recommendations in the original decennial evaluation report. Both total numbers should be identical. Do not include highlighted recommendations.

**Signature of  
Principal/Headmaster  
Signature of Chair  
of Follow-up  
Committee**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Position**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Library/  
Media  
Coordinator

**Date Progress Report  
Submitted**

\_\_\_\_\_  
February 28, 2007