

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

**Commission on Public Schools**



**Commission on Public Schools**

**Report of the Visiting Team for  
Middletown High School**

Middletown, CT

04-28-2024 - 05-01-2024

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# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

The historic town of Middletown was one of the first settlements in Connecticut. Originally called Mattabeseck in 1650, Middletown received its current name in 1653. The town initially encompassed not only the current city but also the towns of Portland and East Hampton. Middletown was a lively sailing port and, by the latter half of the eighteenth century, became the largest and most prosperous settlement in Connecticut.

Middletown today is home to a unique mix of urban and suburban neighborhoods, as well as being home to Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community College. Main Street in Middletown is a well-known destination for dining, featuring over 75 eateries. Middletown has an active arts community, with the Oddfellows Theatre, the Buttonwood Tree, and the Zilka Gallery at Wesleyan. Middletown High School is the oldest continuously run high school in Connecticut, founded in 1840, and has had locations on Pearl Street downtown, Hunting Hill Avenue, and now LaRosa Lane.

According to the 2022 census, Middletown has a population of 48,700. The demographics are 69 percent white, 15 percent black or African American, 11 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Asian, with 8 percent identifying as two or more races. The median household income is \$75,120, although 12 percent of families live below the poverty line.

Middletown is home to eight public elementary schools, one public middle school, and one public high school. There are several parochial schools in town. The current district enrollment in Middletown sits at about 4800. Middletown spent \$22,039 per pupil in 2023. The state average is \$20,165. Certified teachers missed an average of 13.5 days in 2023. Nineteen percent of students in the district are chronically absent, missing 10 percent of school days or more.

Middletown High School has an enrollment of approximately 1,200 students. Students can also take classes through partnership programs at Wesleyan University and Middlesex Community College. There are also opportunities for dual enrollment classes through the University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University, and Southern Connecticut State University.

The school requires students to earn 25 credits to graduate, as well as complete 20 hours of community service. In the Class of 2023, the graduation rate was 99 percent. Eighty-nine percent of students go on to pursue further education or training; in the Class of 2023, 54 percent went on to attend a four-year college, 26 percent went to a two-year college, 9 percent went to trade school, and 2 percent went on to the military. Forty-eight percent of students participate in the free and reduced lunch program; however, free breakfast and lunch are provided to all students through participation in the Community Eligibility Provisions of the National School Lunch Program.

Middletown High School takes great pride in the athletics and activities available to students. We offer 36 varsity sports, 32 lower level sports, and 38 clubs and activities. Almost 75 percent of the school participates in one or more of these opportunities.

Middletown High School is also home to a regional agricultural science program. The program is designed to allow students to develop an interest in agriculture and gain hands-on experience. Two credits are earned each year for successfully completing the in-school instruction, practical agricultural experience program, and the FFA (leadership and personal growth). The curriculum provides instruction in plant science, agricultural mechanics, animal science, and natural resources.

## Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

### Core Values, Beliefs, and the Portrait of a Global Citizen

## Theory of Action

If Middletown believes that every student has the right quality, student-centered education, THEN adults will cultivate creative, accessible, and innovative structures and opportunities with students, AND every student will demonstrate personalized growth and achieve at high levels to thrive in life.

## Portrait of a Global Citizen (draft)

### Grade Band Working Document

Middletown Public Schools Portrait of a Global Citizen

#### Skill and DefinitionPreK - 2nd3rd - 5th6th - 8th9th - 12th

<b>Empathy and Self-Awareness</b>  <i>Empathetic learners possess a profound understanding of themselves and others, balancing their needs and growth with compassion for those around them.</i>		I can name and communicate my own and others emotions as well as name ways to manage my emotions.	I can identify and regulate my emotions in different situations.	I can identify and practice coping skills proactively to manage my emotions effectively.
	I can name and communicate my feelings and emotions and those of others.	I can understand and name how my actions and words can impact others.	I can recognize my perspectives and those of others and can exist among different perspectives without the need to persuade, argue or convince.	I can approach others in a variety of situations with curiosity rather than assumptions.
	With support, I can understand how my words and actions affect others.	I can reflect on my own thoughts, feelings, and actions to develop my self-awareness.	I can demonstrate kindness and compassion towards others even if our perspectives don't align.	I can express my authentic self and promote and encourage authenticity in others.
	I can name my own strengths and stretches.	I can recognize and respect the boundaries and personal space of others.		

## Collaboration

*Skilled collaborators adeptly engage with diverse individuals, fostering innovation through shared perspectives and flexible thinking while recognizing their role within a broader community.*

I can share my thoughts with my classmates and listen to their thoughts.

I can negotiate ideas with my peers.

I can use accountable talk moves in group situations

I can practice and encourage cooperative behaviors when working in a group.

I can take on a variety of roles when working with others.

I can set and reflect on goals for working with others in groups.

I can combine my thinking with the thinking of others to construct new ideas.

I can reflect on and identify areas for growth and improvement of a group's dynamics.

I can be flexible in my approach to working with others.

I can elevate the expertise and talents of the group to accomplish goals.

I can understand my own strengths and areas for development to effectively partner with others.

I can fulfill my responsibility to and hold myself accountable for my contributions to the group.

I can advocate for my ideas & the ideas of others. I can advocate for help from my peers in a group dynamic.

## Communication

*Proficient communicators convey information clearly and purposefully, actively listen, adapt messages to diverse audiences, utilize various communication methods, and advocate confidently for themselves and others.*

I can take turns when talking to others.

I can communicate using different tools (technology, languages, symbols, etc.)

I can recognize and respond to the body language of others.

I can clearly communicate my ideas in small and larger groups.

I can recognize that body language communicates messages to others and may mean different things to different cultures.

I can consider and understand my audience in order to design messages that meet their needs.

I can share and receive messages within audiences of various sizes, including globally or across social networks.

I can responsibly craft messages in various media and languages for greatest impact.

I can use global and local platforms to advocate for my needs and the needs of others.

I can listen to others with an intention to hear and understand their ideas and perspectives rather than listening to respond or comment.

I can craft messages to be culturally responsive to diverse audiences.

## Problem Solving

*Problem Solvers tackle challenges as chances to innovate, devising various strategies and exhibiting the resilience to apply them effectively across different spheres of life.*

I can ask for help when I have a problem.

I can work with others to solve a problem.

I can work through steps to solve a problem.

I can remix or improve upon existing products or processes.

I can create multiple solutions and choose the best one to solve challenges within given boundaries.

I can differentiate between significant and minor problems and design appropriately scaled solutions.

I can independently seek appropriate and effective resources and utilize them to enact solutions that I've designed.

I can use a solutions-focused mindset (think, act, reflect) to overcome challenges when solving problems.

I can apply my problem solving skill-set across a variety of contexts and different spheres of life.

## Critical Consciousness

*Informed and engaged citizens recognize the influence of identity on experiences, comprehend inequitable systems, and are empowered to advocate for justice, actively contributing to a better community and world.*

I can ask a peer to share their thoughts when we disagree.

I can recognize and describe unfairness when it happens to self and others.

I can recognize that I have many identities but I am also my unique self.

I can engage in respectful and constructive discussions about social issues.

I can research and gather information to support my understanding of complex social issues.

I can name my own beliefs and values.

I can recognize and challenge stereotypes and biases in media and everyday life.

I can inform others of historical and societal issues regarding equity and justice.

I can articulate how my beliefs and values influence my understanding of the world.

I can be actively aware of systems of inequity in order to advocate for change in my community and beyond.

I can lead or join with others to take action on issues involving equity and justice.

I can reflect on how my values guide my decisions.

## Creativity and Innovation

*Creative innovators courageously take intellectual risks; they push boundaries to introduce novel and valuable ideas, harness imagination to bring them to fruition, and find joy in the realm of the unknown.*

I can use tools and technology in different ways to explore and show others my ideas.

I can use my senses to explore my world.

I can ask and explore 'what if' questions.

I can understand mistakes and practice many different ways to solve them.

I can think outside the box and come up with unique and original concepts.

I can embrace mistakes as learning and express what I learned from them.

I can continuously learn and explore new areas to expand my creative and innovative thinking.

I can seek inspiration from various sources and incorporate different perspectives to adapt, modify, and enhance existing ideas.

I can feel empowered to pursue my passions, take risks, and embrace failure as learning opportunities to foster innovation.

I can creatively use technology and digital tools to bring my ideas to life.

I can design and create novel systems, products, and/or content that positively impacts a community.

I can openly receive feedback to improve upon initial drafts or iterations.

## Critical Thinking and Inquiry

*Critical thinkers consistently engage in research and inquiry; driven by curiosity, they embrace diverse perspectives, analyze complex information, and embrace being a lifelong learner.*

I can ask W/H (who, what, how, etc.) questions to find information.

I can express reasons to support my ideas.

I can ask questions to discover or investigate in order to form new learning.

I can inquire in different contexts to gain different perspectives.

I can apply skills and knowledge to unfamiliar situations in or outside of school.

I can ask questions to fuel joy and excitement in learning

I can make connections between different subjects/topics and apply knowledge in new and creative ways.

I can reflect on my own thinking to adjust my beliefs based on new information, evidence, knowledge, skills, and conceptual understandings.

I can use my radical imagination to ask questions that explore new possibilities

I can navigate multiple and varied resources and analyze their validity and bias in order to incorporate information into my own thinking

**Note: We are shifting to the Portrait of a Global Citizen from the PRIDE model shared below. While there are many similarities, we believe that a district wide vision will better serve to inform and empower students to succeed both during and after their tenure in the Middletown Public Schools.**

## Former Core Values

Middletown High School values **Preparation**, **Respect**, **Integrity**, **Determination**, and **Excellence**. Through rigorous curriculum and the building of relationships among faculty, staff, students, and community, we empower students to become lifelong learners. Our educational community will foster self-esteem and a culture of achievement and acceptance. Students will leave Middletown High School with the 21st-century skills necessary to maximize their potential as productive members of society and contributors to the global community.

### Preparation

To use 21st-century skills and become self-sufficient and active contributors in a dynamically changing world.

### Respect

For the school's institutional framework and values which reflect consideration and regard for people and property, while embracing differences in culture, ideas, and beliefs.

### Integrity

To maintain high ethical and professional standards in our daily interactions, our work and ourselves.

### Determination

To realize one's fullest potential in the face of social, intellectual, emotional, and physical challenges.

### Excellence

In every endeavor reflected in a clear commitment to achieve the highest standards.

### Show **PRIDE!**

## School Improvement/Growth Plan

The school improvement/growth plan is attached.

### Related Files

- [2024\\_04\\_18-10\\_13\\_MHS\\_School\\_Continuous\\_Improvement\\_Plan\\_2023-24.pdf](#)

# LEARNING CULTURE

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## Learning Culture

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

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



# STUDENT LEARNING

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## Student Learning

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

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

# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

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## Professional Practices

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

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

# LEARNING SUPPORT

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## Learning Support

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

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

# LEARNING RESOURCES

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## Learning Resources

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

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

# Introduction

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## Introduction

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees, which supervises the work of three Commissions: the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools (CPS); and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

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

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

### Preparation for the Accreditation Visit

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

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

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

### The Process Used by the Visiting Team

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

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting team consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting team are included within each section of the report. The report includes

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

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

# Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.1a

Middletown High School provides a safe learning environment for all staff and students, and the school community takes safety seriously. There is a building administrator assigned to monitor building safety and security who holds regular meetings with a safety committee. There are six campus safety officers and two school resource officers on-site, and, beginning during the 2023-2024 school year, the ScholarChip program was instituted, which requires all students to check in at kiosks each morning upon arrival. In the spring of 2024, the ScholarChip program was extended to all public spaces, including the classrooms, cafeteria, school counseling, and bathrooms. All students and staff are expected to have their school/district identification on their person at all times. The school also completes the requisite annual safety drills, such as fire and lockdown drills.

The school's advisory program is another way the school works to deliberately build a safe emotional environment for students. Students are a part of the same advisory group for all four years and have the opportunity to build strong relationships with each other and their advisors during this daily program. While the advisory program continues to be an area of focus for the school, the long-standing practice of the advisory is an integral part of the school culture. In addition, various school-specific programs are part of the school culture, such as Girls Inspired for Total Success (GIFTS) and Men of Excellence, which provide a supportive space for students who may otherwise feel marginalized or disaffected. These programs meet during the school day, either during advisory or at a designated day/time of the week, and include extra-curricular activities for student members of these programs.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

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## Foundational Element 1.2a

The school does not yet have an updated written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

At present, the school district predicates its work on a published Middletown Public Schools Theory of Action, which communicates the District's core values and beliefs about learning: *In Middletown Public Schools, we believe in boldly unlocking the potential in all students by providing an education that is student-centered, collaborative, responsive to data, and demands critical thinking. Every day, every student receives high-quality instruction that is grounded in equity and social and emotional learning to prepare them to be future-ready global citizens.* In addition, the district spent the 2023-2024 school year developing a district-wide portrait of the global citizen, including "I can" statements. Finally, a district-wide instructional vision was developed during the 2022-2023 school year, and during the 2023-2024 school year, departmental "look fors" grounded in the theory of action were developed through the calibration walkthroughs conducted by administrators, department leaders, supervisors, and instructional coaches.

However, the portrait of the global citizen and instructional vision look-fors work has yet to be widely shared with teachers, students, or the community. The lack of a single, vibrant, guiding document that identifies the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate impedes the school's ability to discern which priorities are most important to focus on to attain the school's goals.

## Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard



# Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

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## Foundational Element 2.2a

The school does not yet have a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. A district-wide curriculum is a foundation for curriculum maps for all courses, including units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Though there are written curricula in many content areas and most of the courses required for graduation, there is no universal format or vocabulary to which every curriculum is aligned. Many curriculum documents include units of study, guiding questions, essential content and skills, scope and sequence, and/or curriculum maps, but there is no universal approach used across every content area throughout the school. In addition, there are some required courses and many elective courses that lack a written curriculum.

## Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

# Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

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## Foundational Element 3.1a

The school has a current school improvement plan. The MHS School Continuous Improvement Plan 2023-24 is aligned with the district improvement plan. The plan includes school-specific goals based on four pillars: talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. The plan is created by the principal and administrative team with input from faculty and staff. Each assistant principal is responsible for reporting on an assigned pillar regularly at building administrator meetings. Administrators and staff share responsibility for achieving the goals laid out in the school improvement plan.

### Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

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## Foundational Elements 4.1a

The district has intervention strategies designed to support students. The school provides numerous intervention programs and offers support for students. Formal programs such as Effective School Solutions (ESS), CT RISE, Aspiring Young Leaders (AYL), and the school-based health center support students' academic, social, emotional, mental, and physical health. The school/district has hired student engagement specialists, behavior technicians, a special education coach, a social-emotional learning coach, and an interventionist to support student well-being. The school has a process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance. School counselors review their caseloads biweekly with administrators to flag students who may be at risk. In addition, teachers can email school counselors to bring concerns about students to the counselors' and administrators' attention.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

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## Foundational Element 5.1a

The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The school ensures a safe, secure, and healthy environment for students and adults. School facilities are maintained and updated, including a newly renovated library media center (LMC) during the summer of 2023. The school is clean and well-maintained. Custodial and technology department staff keep the facilities and resources in excellent condition for learning. The school buildings and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

## Rating

Meets the Standard

# Foundational Elements Ratings

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## Foundational Element Ratings

<b>Foundational Elements.</b>	<b>Collaborative Conference School's Rating</b>	<b>Collaborative Conference Visitors' Rating</b>	<b>Decennial School's Rating</b>	<b>Decennial Visitors' Rating</b>
1.1a - Learning Culture	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
1.2a - Learning Culture	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
2.2a - Student Learning	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
3.1a - Professional Practices	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
4.1a - Learning Support	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard
5.1a - Learning Resources	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard	Meets the Standard

# Priority Area 1

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## Priority Area

Middletown High School will complete and implement a vision of the graduate, ensuring that it has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success and provides feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving this vision (1.2a. 1.2, 2.1).

## Action, Impact, and Growth

Prior to the pandemic closures, Middletown High School began the process of creating a vision of the graduate. This process was halted until 2022-2023 due to obstacles encountered during reopening and changes in school and district administration. In the fall of 2023, the district shifted to developing a PK-12 Portrait of a Global Citizen that outlines the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. The district hired an outside consulting firm to facilitate the community engagement data collection and creation of the portrait of a global citizen. The district also put together a district-wide steering committee, which was composed of a diverse group of students, alumni, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. One teacher, one assistant principal, two 6-12 content area supervisors, one student, and two parents represented Middletown High School on this steering committee.

Stakeholders participated in two rounds of community engagement to understand the skills they believe Middletown Public School graduates should have for future success. The first round of community engagement focused on understanding the student experience and the characteristics colleges and career professionals look for in recent graduates. This data collection included a survey, student focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. Recent alumni and college admissions officers were surveyed on the essential skills Middletown learners need to thrive after graduation. Recent alumni also provided insight into their perceptions of access and communication, belonging, climate and responsive culture, curriculum and instruction, wellness, and overall experience from their time as students in the district. Middle school and high school students also participated in focus groups to provide more evidence on trends that emerged in the survey data. Two college admission officers and one alumnus also participated in one-on-one interviews to provide more insight into the skills that are needed outside of high school. The second round of community engagement focused on getting feedback on the first draft of these transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions from a group of recent alumni and current students, parents and families, community members, school leaders, and various school staff members.

The steering committee then met to distill feedback into seven key attributes that are necessary for future success:

- 1) Empathy and Self-Awareness
- 2) Collaboration
- 3) Communication
- 4) Problem-Solving
- 5) Critical Consciousness
- 6) Creativity and Innovation
- 7) Critical Thinking and Inquiry

After another round of feedback, the committee created a matrix of “I can” statements for each key attribute according to grade level – PreK-2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th-12th.

The school has identified the need for a robust roll-out plan to be created in collaboration with district leadership by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The preliminary district plan includes a communications package to share with the community at large, a celebration meeting with the steering committee that created the portrait of a global citizen, and a curriculum and assessment review to understand where they can build guaranteed

experiences to allow students to demonstrate the attributes.

At this time, the stakeholders who were involved in developing the portrait of a global citizen are optimistic about the impact these “I can” statements will have on the school's culture and practices. However, it is yet to be determined what the impact will be on student learning, achievement, and well-being because the portrait of a global citizen has not been rolled out with staff, students, and the broader community or embedded into curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

Since the Collaborative Conference, the PK-12 portrait of a global citizen has been developed with a matrix of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success, but it has only been released to small groups of teachers who provided feedback on early versions of the attributes during the development process. Most teachers are unaware of the portrait of a global citizen and its attributes. In order for the portrait of a global citizen to become ingrained in the culture and teaching and learning in the school, many steps still need to be taken. Implementing the portrait of a global citizen will be critical to ensuring the fluidity and purposefulness of programs already in place at the school. This should be treated as an essential step before all other projects/initiatives in order to guide them.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Ensure the portrait of a global citizen and the attributes are known and understood by all members of the school community

Ensure the portrait of a global citizen attributes are actively reflected in the school culture and drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment of every classroom

Ensure the portrait of a global citizen attributes guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations

Embed the portrait of a global citizen attributes into the curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to strategically build opportunities for students to develop these attributes throughout their learning experiences in every classroom over the four years of high school

Articulate the portrait of a global citizen at all grade levels and use the language of the portrait of a global citizen in conversations with students, in assignments, on projects, etc.

Develop professional learning experiences for teachers aligned to best practices for assessing students along the seven attributes identified in the portrait of a global citizen and communicating progress to students and families

Incorporate the portrait of a global citizen attributes into the scope and sequence of the school's advisory programming

Define specific and measurable criteria for success, such as schoolwide analytic rubrics, which target high levels of achievement

Develop a system to track the development of these portrait of a global citizen attributes over time from 9th grade to 12th grade

Develop a formal process to assess and communicate individual learner progress toward achieving this vision to students and families

Develop an annual report on whole-school progress toward achieving this vision

Develop professional learning experiences for community members to provide tools and strategies that can be given to parents that will complement the portrait of a global citizen work being done in school

## Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- parents
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school summary report
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers



# Priority Area 2

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## Priority Area

Middletown High School will complete a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of a graduate (2.2a, 2.2).

## Action, Impact, and Growth

While the school has taken steps to develop a written curriculum for all courses in all departments across the school, there has yet to be a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments. Across departments, the written curriculum is generally organized into units of study, guiding questions, big ideas, essential content and skills, scope and sequence, and/or curriculum maps.

The school has taken various steps to develop a written curriculum for all courses in all departments across the school. Many departments have been working to ensure alignment with state and/or national standards applicable to their discipline. The math department has adopted the *Illustrative Math* curriculum and they are working to integrate courses to streamline the standards and make math courses more accessible to all students. With the addition of a district-wide math director and 6-12 supervisor, this department is leading the way in standards-based curriculum development. The science department has worked to align its full curriculum with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). They have adopted the *Catalyst Learning Curriculum* program, which is aligned with NGSS. They have also begun implementing the *Modern Classroom* model, where students work independently, track their progress, and master the standards using common assessments. The social studies department has undergone revisions to create standards-based units and assessments aligning with the Connecticut Core Standards and the Connecticut Social Studies Framework. They are also working to maintain fidelity to state mandates surrounding the teaching of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies, and Native and Indigenous history. The English department has partnered with the Institute for Learning (IFL) to review selected units during the 2022-2023 school year; their feedback continues to shape curriculum revision and professional learning in the department. The health and wellness department created a mission statement to ground its curriculum, aligned with SHAPE, America's National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education. The multilingual learners department has piloted a new written curriculum this school year with thematic units that incorporate reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In world language, there is a consistent curriculum aligned with ACTFL standards in a consistent format for levels 1 and 2 in Spanish, French, and Italian. Teachers in all departments are provided opportunities to participate in paid curriculum creation/revision, and department chairs or supervisors are responsible for assessing the quality of written curricula and associated documents. Many of the data teams share effective instructional and assessment strategies and have worked to create common assessments and use the time to revise and update the curriculum.

The result of these action steps can be seen in various ways. With a focus on developing a curriculum that is based on state and/or national standards, teachers feel confident that the content and skills they are teaching align with best practices in their discipline. Instruction in math classes is more consistent, and pacing has been more effective. The math department feels supported not only by new leadership but also by the community through workshops designed to include all stakeholders in curriculum development decisions. In science courses, the new curriculum provides hands-on activities that are more engaging for the students, and implementing Modern Classroom has provided student agency. English teachers feel they have autonomy when developing and revising curriculum. Teachers understand where to find the course curriculum, and data teams review and revise it consistently to ensure they are responsive to student needs. An additional impact of the work is seen in the multilingual learner department, where teachers feel empowered and confident that their students are supported by the implementation of the new curriculum.

The school's growth in this Priority Area is indicated by several pieces of evidence, primarily a collection of working documents from most departments indicating curricular work has been developed, reviewed, and

revised, some with the help of outside agencies. The growth necessary to fully implement this Priority Area includes establishing a consistent written format for all curricular documents, incorporating the portrait of a global citizen attributes, and integrating elements of standards-based grading.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Complete the written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices.

Incorporate and align the portrait of a global citizen into curricular documents in a common written format for all courses/programs

Develop and implement professional learning and collaboration towards the development of a standards-based curriculum to strengthen rigor and improve clarity of expectations

Ensure curricular documents and student expectations are easily accessible to all community members and stakeholders

Establish a uniform and consistent protocol for curriculum review and revision

Continue to make common planning time a priority for content area teams to review, revise, and update curricular documents as needed

## **Sources of Evidence**

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

# Priority Area 3

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## Priority Area

Middletown High School will develop more explicit plans, curriculum, and expected student outcomes and experiences for the PRIDE advisory program (1.3, 4.1).

## Action, Impact, and Growth

Following the Collaborative Conference, the school took decisive action to enhance its advisory program. Administrators and support staff developed a comprehensive scope and sequence. Each student was assigned the same advisor for four years, and there were structured weekly meetings, focusing particularly on Wednesdays for extended sessions dedicated to social-emotional learning, college readiness, and student-led conference preparation.

At the onset of the academic year, the school dedicated the first two days to the advisory program to foster team-building and orientation activities, especially beneficial for new students. While the program aimed for a balanced approach to meeting the diverse learner needs, challenges emerged, such as teacher turnover affecting student-teacher connections and repetition in some lessons.

The Middletown Social and Emotional Learning and Intervention Coordinator (MESLI) conducted a thorough review to address these issues, affirming the program's alignment with best practices. Students feel that advisory has multiple functions, such as an opportunity for academic intervention, receiving support from the college and career counselor, establishing connections, and an overall social and emotionally safe place. However, discrepancies remained in student and teacher perceptions. Students valued advisory for various supports and connections, while teachers sought more professional development for effective engagement, especially in facilitating uncomfortable conversations.

A pivotal aspect of the advisory was the student-led exhibitions, providing opportunities for students to reflect on their academic and personal growth, supported by their advisor and a parent/guardian. These exhibitions served as the basis for a capstone project to strengthen teacher-student bonds and aid students' career planning.

A community service component was introduced, allowing students to engage in meaningful projects. However, challenges arose in ensuring student-led initiatives and advisor engagement, highlighting the need for clearer communication and expectations.

Looking ahead, the school aims to refine the advisory curriculum, integrating the portrait of a global citizen framework to measure student attributes. Recognizing teachers' increasing role in students' social-emotional well-being, the school plans to engage all stakeholders effectively to enhance the advisory experience for all.

## Recommended Next Steps

Incorporate the attributes of the portrait of a global citizen into the written advisory curriculum

Review and revise advisory lessons to ensure they meet the needs of all students, are purposeful, and time-effective

Develop and implement a formal process for evaluating the efficacy of the advisory program

Ensure faculty and staff have the opportunity to be included in the development and/or review and revision of the advisory program and curriculum

Clearly define faculty expectations for the implementation and delivery of the advisory program

## **Sources of Evidence**

- classroom observations
- priority area meetings
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

# Priority Area 4

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## Priority Area

Middletown High School will take collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community (1.3).

## Action, Impact, and Growth

Middletown High School takes collective responsibility for the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student and demonstrates how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community. With the return to school from COVID, reconnecting students to the school community was an area of significant importance. Middletown High School has an impressive number and variety of efforts to engage the school's diverse group of students, including the advisory period, which meets daily and matches students to an adult in the building for all four years of the student's high school career. A college and career center staffed by a counselor provides support and direction for students' post-secondary transition. There are also a number of services that have been established for student support. The district implemented the use of the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) in the 2023-2024 school year to help identify students needing social-emotional support. Biweekly meetings of the school counseling staff occur where data is analyzed to identify at-risk students and determine the next steps for academic interventions. A school based health center is housed within the school where students who are registered for the service receive physical and mental health services. The attributes of the forthcoming portrait of a global citizen are intended to support the tenets of a school community that is empathetic, self-aware, and respectful.

A district social-emotional learning and intervention coordinator is in place to help match students with needed support and provide social-emotional practices to the students. The director of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) supports monthly meetings to promote acceptance and understanding throughout the school. The Effective School Solutions (ESS) program serves around 30 students, including students with and without special needs. Upward Bound provides a variety of supports and opportunities to students who are first generation college bound, or below an income threshold. RISE has been implemented, supporting 120 students, broken into two cohorts of 60. Each cohort is composed of a team of teachers in addition to a dedicated school counselor and assistant principal assigned to each cohort. There are also original, school-based programs aimed at supporting at-risk students. The Girls Inspired for Total Success (GIFTS) program targets behaviorally and academically challenged young women and has existed for over 15 years. The Men of Excellence program focuses on at-risk young men and functions as a safe space where students can share thoughts and feelings with their peers and the program's advisor. Finally, there are student engagement specialists that are active in the community, along with multiple community based partnerships to provide safe places for students as well as employment opportunities.

Since the Collaborative Conference, Middletown High School has made some progress in taking stock of these multiple programs and implementing new programs and processes to improve the student experience. The implementation of DESSA allows staff and administrators to identify students needing social-emotional support and assess student growth. The recent addition of the district DEIB coordinator has helped the school highlight areas of need with professional development and classroom support. The ESS program provides a multi-tiered approach to student mental health care, and the referral process has been streamlined for greater efficiency since the Collaborative Conference. There has also been improved engagement and parent involvement as well as collaboration with teachers and increased program access to service all students compared to only students with special needs, as was the previous practice. The partnership with the CTRISE network has identified incoming ninth-grade students who are in need of targeted academic support, providing early interventions and a smaller learning community where teachers and staff know each of the learners and work as a team to address their needs.

## Recommended Next Steps

Assess the impact of the school's actions to address school connectedness and inform the next steps

Create a process to assess the effectiveness of the advisory program in creating student-to-school relationships and make adjustments as appropriate

Communicate the process used to identify students in need of academic support

Build upon the success of programs established to support at-risk ninth-grade students, as those students who are still in need of support matriculate through high school

Formally integrate the attributes of the portrait of a global citizen into programming aimed at supporting the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional well-being of every student

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers

# Priority Area 5

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## Priority Area

Middletown High School will ensure that all students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning at all course levels (2.5).

## Action, Impact, and Growth

Middletown High School provides a diverse range of courses and electives designed to meet the varied interests of its student body. This extensive selection of courses allows students to explore different career paths in industries such as aerospace, video production, and agriscience. The school offers numerous dual enrollment early college experience (ECE) classes through partnerships with UConn, CCSU, SCSU, and MCC. Additionally, 11th and 12th-grade students can enroll in classes at nearby universities like Wesleyan University, Central Connecticut State University, and Middlesex Community College, giving them a head start on college coursework while still in high school. To encourage student agency during class instruction, the school has implemented measures allowing students to take charge of their learning across all levels of courses through flexible unit pacing and assessment options across all class levels.

Multiple departments have used data team meetings as dedicated common planning time to design assured experiences that promote student agency. Teachers have incorporated various assessment approaches, giving students a choice in how they show their understanding. The social studies and English departments use choice boards for their end-of-unit assessments throughout the year, which allows students to select how they want to demonstrate their knowledge. Options on these choice boards include portfolios, TikTok videos, slideshow presentations, comic strips, brochures, and posters. The science department emphasizes an inquiry-based approach at all levels, with a particular focus on creating models, such as a DNA model, to illustrate scientific concepts. The faculty is dedicated to encouraging students to think critically and creatively, allowing them to engage with the design process at their own skill level. In the media design program, students can choose between creating a stop-motion animation or a green-screen video for their projects. Working in groups, they plan the storyboard, film the content, handle the editing, and decide to edit their work either on a computer or a mobile device.

Social studies teachers also use data team meetings to examine opportunities within their curriculum for student-led learning, enabling them to identify and fill gaps. They recently audited their world history curriculum to assess the level of student choice, which helped the department identify which areas required adjustment to allow for more student voice in the coursework.

Students can also learn at their own pace with the Modern Classroom program currently piloted in two ninth-grade RISE classrooms. This platform allows students to choose assignments that align with their interests and level of challenge. It also offers differentiation in pace. Other subjects, such as biology, are considering implementing this program and have participated in professional learning, as English teachers are sharing positive experiences with how effectively it works. Students have become more invested in their studies, leading to an improvement in the quality of their work as a result of giving students the opportunity to take charge of their learning.

During the agriscience open house, students choose their project topics based on an authentic experience to display to the community. For example, students presented on subjects such as how different feathers appear on various birds, using a laser engraver for business applications, bringing in a parrot for demonstration, or demonstrating ocean pollution by extracting trash from a water tank.

Integrating real-world connections into the curriculum has helped students be successful. Bluetube, for example, is a highly popular advisory program because it offers genuine, hands-on experiences. The robotics team competes throughout the year leading up to the world championships in Dallas. In the UCONN ECE Introduction to Human Rights class, students have complete freedom in choosing their final research paper topic, as long as it

relates to activism. The students can choose how they want to present their work through poetry, a video, a website, or another format. Rather than presenting to their peers, some students have opted to present to the board of education. This project has inspired some students to continue their activism by connecting with professionals in the field. They seek real-world contacts to further their advocacy, which creates a genuine learning experience. In pre-calculus, students explore compound interest and student loans in a practical way. They choose in-state and out-of-state colleges they are interested in, look up financial information, and create projects based on these insights. This approach to learning through real-world applications keeps students engaged and fosters deeper understanding.

In some classes, students have a voice in developing their success criteria. They assist in creating the rubric that the teacher will use to evaluate their work. Additionally, students are encouraged to self-assess, reflect, and use teacher feedback when revising their assignments, though not many students take full advantage of this opportunity. The student-led flexible unit and assignment pacing is aligned with the school's makeup work policy. Students at Middletown High School can retake and redo assignments until they are satisfied with their learning and grades. However, this flexibility can pose challenges for students who do not have the skill set to choose their pacing appropriately. Some students struggle to complete work in a timely manner, which can negatively impact their ability to access the learning of the next day's lesson.

## **Recommended Next Steps**

Create more opportunities to embed relevance and offer student voice and choice in all classes across all academic levels

Create a universal protocol for all data team meetings to ensure that students equitably experience learning activities that allow for choice and demonstration of depth of knowledge regardless of the department and level of the course

Provide professional development on student-led assignments, assessments, and grading criteria and practices so that all teachers across all departments are prepared to include these best practices in their teaching

## **Sources of Evidence**

- classroom observations
- facility tour
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school summary report
- students
- teacher interview
- teachers



# Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

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## Reflection on Student Learning

The school offers courses ranging in difficulty from college prep and honors to advanced placement (AP) and early college experience (ECE) classes, along with the ninth-grade CTRISE program. Teachers are cognizant of offering support for students, such as guided note-taking and using audiobooks to supplement in-class readings. Teachers incorporate supplemental materials such as videos, visuals/manipulatives, and strategies like sentence starters to help students who need additional support. The school is piloting Modern Classroom to provide alternative ways for students to access information at their own pace. Teachers work in data teams reviewing information from common formative assessments to direct and adjust the next steps in their instruction. Teachers also consider individual student needs, such as when student anxiety prevents students from participating in public presentations, and consider student learning differences to help guide instruction. The school provides appropriate support for multilingual learners (MLLs). While teachers are highly responsive to students' instructional needs, there is a lack of collaborative time with special education teachers to provide additional guidance with appropriate modifications for students.

Students have many opportunities across multiple classes to demonstrate the ability to personalize their learning experiences. There is a prioritization across the content areas to provide students with a voice and choices to empower them to guide their learning processes. Teachers strive to create lessons that are grounded in relevance and tap into students' passions. Teachers also share that they promote creativity in students by allowing a broad range of project submissions, such as choice boards of social media posts, videos, presentations, brochures, etc. Science classes provide inquiry-based instruction, where students generate models to help provide explanations for natural phenomena. Students can self-select topics such as in US history and in ESL classes, such as investigation of a natural disaster of their choice, and then apply their research to class discussion of nuclear energy initiatives. Students demonstrate the applications of what they learn in class to real-life scenarios, such as making connections between the precise measurement techniques in sciences and applications in the measurement of construction materials. Students complete much of their work in their classes and are rarely asked to complete assignments outside of class time.

There are many opportunities for learners to engage creatively with content across their classes through the prompting of teachers across the school. When students have trouble in class discussions, teachers skillfully help them connect to previous learning via a recap of vocabulary and analogies and even use previously generated student DNA models to help students connect with new ideas. Teachers facilitate applications of new concepts to authentic situations such as having students review graphed data of various ECGs and using them to explain how the heart rate system malfunctioned for patients with different conditions. Teachers are open to incorporating student suggestions for approaches to engage with class content. While students have the opportunity to make suggestions about how they are assessed, some students indicate they would like to experience a higher level of academic challenge. Students are offered classes, ranging from college prep through AP/ECE classes, to engage in higher-order thinking.

Educators provide a variety of assessments to help guide their instruction. Educators have the opportunity to work together in data teams to generate common assessments, discuss curriculum decisions, and collaborate with the other professionals on their team. Classes across all content areas use rubrics that are provided to students ahead of time to communicate the criteria for success. Students also have opportunities to engage in peer feedback practices across classes as well. Students are able to use the same rubrics they use for self-assessment to provide feedback for their peers' work. Students got individual electronic feedback after participating in gamified reviews, such as practicing Italian vocabulary on Blooket. Some students create exhibitions of their work in preparation to lead their own conferences with parents. The criteria for the newly developed portrait of the global citizen has yet to be widely released to the school community. Students have the opportunity to revise their work based on the personalized feedback they receive and resubmit assignments. However, there are inconsistencies regarding whether students resubmit work in the allotted time frame.

Technology is a major facet of the culture for learners in Middletown High School. Every student across the school has access to a device, whether they use the device the school provides or choose to bring in their personal device. There are many different ways that educators use technology to enhance lessons and support student learning. Teachers directly use technology on the Google Classroom platform to provide personal feedback to students. For example, they provide additional support for students by reading and listening to audiobooks together in class, creating enrichment opportunities via online phET simulations or blood typing activities. Students participate in technology-based review games such as on Blooket and playing Jeopardy as a class. Additionally, programs such as Modern Classroom allow the use of technology to provide additional support for students by allowing them to access and complete course content at their own pace. Technology is also used to work with local community members, such as having students participate in a Zoom discussion with a Holocaust survivor. Teachers within the building serve as educational technology specialists to help support colleagues in the meaningful integration of technology across classes.

# Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

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## Conceptual Understanding

The school has a written document that outlines the shared beliefs about learning based on the components of effective learning: collaboration, critical thinking, student-centered, responsive use of data, social and emotional learning, and equity-focused. The district has collaborated with an outside partner and the school to develop beliefs about learning. The instructional vision with descriptors and beliefs about learning have been shared with the staff during faculty meetings but have not been integrated into instructional planning and practices.

The district has partnered with administrators and teachers to develop classroom walkthrough tools with look-fors that align with the district's instructional vision. School leaders have received professional development in coaching and providing effective feedback aligned with the district classroom look---fors tool.

The six components of effective instruction intend to serve as the foundation document for classroom instruction. Clear alignment of these practices with the portrait of a global citizen will enable teachers to make the connection to effective instructional practices and embed them into their curriculum documents and classroom instructional practices.

The school staff has a limited understanding of the key concepts of the Priority Areas for improvement. In addition, the district has not released the portrait of a global citizen to the school community as a whole. However, a representative group of teachers and administrators from Middletown High School have participated on the district planning team to develop the key concepts in the portrait of a global citizen but have not shared the details. The school community is not aware of the timeline for the dissemination of the portrait of a global citizen to the school community or the integration of the dispositions into the curriculum.

The school has an administration and leadership team of teachers who, with guidance and support, have the commitment and capacity to guide their departments through the school improvement process. A focused professional learning plan, including an implementation timeline in collaboration with the central office, will provide clarity and direction for the next steps. Educators will greatly benefit from professional development opportunities aligned with the Priority Areas, improvement in student engagement, and demonstrating a commitment to translating the vision of instruction into classroom practices.

Areas needing attention include the need for more robust data analysis to inform decision-making and the impact of programs, greater alignment between professional development and instructional priorities, and enhanced communication strategies from the district office to the staff to ensure transparency and accountability.

The school can benefit from shared understandings designed to inform curriculum, instruction, assessment, programs, and services. With this tool, the leadership team and faculty would be prepared to expand the definition of learning in the school.

## Commitment

The school is committed to continuous improvement, and the staff has confidence in the leadership to drive this work. The school community is committed to working collaboratively with the district to improve students' experiences, opportunities, and outcomes. The school administration has taken a collaborative and transparent leadership approach with the staff.

The school recognizes the importance of fostering a shared understanding and commitment to the Priority Areas among all staff members. The school has a visual representation of the vision of instruction with detailed descriptors, but the school/district has not integrated them into its instructional practices or curriculum documents.

The district has collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders to develop the PK-12 portrait of a global citizen. Once the portrait is widely shared with all members of the school community, the school can provide time, resources, and guidance to infuse these skills and dispositions into teaching and learning practices.

The school can benefit from professional learning time dedicated to focusing its improvement efforts, such as the portrait of a global citizen, revision to the advisory structure to ensure the time is used effectively, ensuring staff and students have a voice in the development of the lessons, and a clear understanding of the purpose of the advisory in students' feeling of connectedness and sense of belonging.

## Competency

Middletown High School has examined the idea of the growth mindset, beginning with a schoolwide reading of Carol Dweck's *Growth Mindset*. In addition, the staff participated in a staff-wide study of Joe Feldman's *Grading for Equity*, which caused the grading practices to change. The shift in practices allowed for a focus on learning outcomes instead of grades. Students are encouraged to revise assignments and retake assessments. A systemic review of the no grade less than 50 practice and clear guidance and uniformity on the retake opportunities for students will create coherence across the school.

The school has restructured and merged the core and school leadership teams to streamline the flow of communication and create a more inclusive and collaborative working environment for the adults. Most departments have opportunities for collaboration and common planning time. However, non-core areas have limited or no opportunities for collaboration during the school day.

The school leadership team has ongoing professional development with the Middletown Public Schools Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) to strengthen their instructional leadership skills. The OTL works closely with the school leadership team to observe instruction using the district walk-through tool with agreed-upon look-fors. In this way, the school team receives ongoing instructional leadership coaching and support to strengthen their skills and provide meaningful feedback to teachers.

Department leaders and administrators use the instructional vision and specific department look-fors to guide professional learning and provide feedback on walkthroughs with a focus on instructional improvement. The district supervisors and school department chairs plan and deliver professional development to their respective departments. However, there is inconsistency in the availability of department leaders to support the teachers in their content areas. Department leaders divide their availability among middle and high school teachers, creating an inequity in leadership support.

The competing initiatives and efforts do not always align, and time is not allocated to increasing educators' competency in implementing the school's developing definition of effective learning. The school can benefit from a systemic professional learning plan for implementing the portrait of a global citizen and the school's understanding of effective teaching and learning.

The school has identified the portrait of a global citizen, written curriculum in all areas in a common format that integrates the portrait of a global citizen, and the development of more explicit plans, curriculum, and expected student outcomes and experiences for the advisory program. The school has abundant programs, initiatives, and efforts to support students and analyze the levels of implementation and effectiveness of each. Once stock is taken, modify and amplify existing programs as appropriate and then communicate to students, families, and staff members the goal and purpose of each.

In addition, a number of connected areas will be important as the school anticipates implementing a newly developed portrait of a global citizen. Providing students with voice and choice in classrooms, including what and how students learn and how they demonstrate their learning, is an area that has the potential to align with the school's goals. Developing competency for designing performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate

achievement of learning outcomes, like those that will be in the forthcoming portrait of a global citizen, based on specific and measurable criteria and calibrated by educators will be foundational to implementing the portrait of a global citizen.

## Capacity

Teachers in core academic areas have collaboration time in their schedules. Some content areas can meet multiple times weekly as instructional data teams (IDTs).

However, non-core teachers do not have IDT time in their schedule to collaborate with their colleagues, analyze student work, align pacing and instruction, and revise curriculum. Teachers have identified this as a barrier to effective and consistent school improvement efforts. Some department leaders provide professional development and support to middle and high school teachers. This bifurcated structure causes gaps in the department leaders' learning and impedes clear communication and consistency in the delivery of professional learning due to their regular absences from school meetings. The staff can benefit from equitable time for all teachers in all departments to collaborate, review, revise, and update curricular documents.

Educators have the necessary financial and human capital resources and are supported by the school and district to make progress on their identified goals. The school will be better poised and have greater capacity as a learning organization and focus on its improvement goals with equitable collaborative and professional development time to align with the school's definition of effective learning, Priority Areas, and the portrait of a global citizen.

When the school begins implementing the portrait of a global citizen, it will be important to dedicate time and resources to building a shared understanding, commitment, and competency in the areas necessary for student success.

# Additional Information

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## Additional Information

### Standard1Principle3

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

School's rating in the Summary Report:Implementing

#### Explanation from the School

According to survey data used as evidence in the original report, close to 50 percent of students did not feel connected to the school or staff, and Spring 2023 data shows that 70 percent of students report they feel somewhat connected or higher to adults in the building. Since the collaborative visits, we have implemented "behavior, attendance, and grades" (BAG) reports through advisory. Advisors meet individually with their students in these meetings to review quarterly data and set goals. Furthermore, the scope and sequence design for advisory periods facilitates more personalized discussions on a daily basis.

#### Response of the Visiting Team

The school demonstrates a commitment to an advisory program where every student has the opportunity to build a relationship over their four years with an adult who can assist in helping them achieve the school's expectations for student learning. However, there is a need for the school to review and revise advisory lessons to ensure they meet the needs of all students and are purposeful. There are a number of interventions and supports outside of the advisory program, both academic and social-emotional, available at the school to help support students.

### Standard1Principle7

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

School's rating in the Summary Report:Implementing

#### Explanation from the School

In addition to the survey data provided in the original narrative report, Middletown High School has made changes to increase civic engagement and social and personal responsibility. Advisory periods now have a community service component in which students work together to create a project beneficial to the school or greater community. In addition, every student is required to do community service as a graduation requirement. The National Honor Society has doubled the number of hours required for its community service component. Agricultural science continues to have an extensive outreach requirement. Our revised grading policy encourages students to take responsibility for their learning by encouraging retakes and revisions.

#### Response of the Visiting Team

One addition to the advisory program in the 2023-2024 school year is a series of lessons where advisory groups were expected to create a community service/outreach plan and execute that plan as a group. However, these lessons were not consistently implemented across the school. Various programs, clubs, and activities foster a culture of civic engagement and personal responsibility, including GIFTS, Men of Excellence, Aspiring Young Leaders (AYL), National Honor Society, and Agriscience. While these programs help create a culture of civic engagement and personal responsibility, they are not inclusive of all students.

### Standard2Principle1

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

School's rating in the Summary Report:Developing

### **Explanation from the School**

The portrait of a global citizen has been created. This resulted from a district initiative to encompass all grade levels, K-12. The portrait of a global citizen identifies seven key attributes and includes "I can" statements for each grade level to assess student progress throughout their education in Middletown Public Schools. The portrait of a global citizen was developed through a collaborative process that included administrators, families, students, and teachers, with the assistance of an outside organization. The PGC also aligns with Middletown Public School's Theory of Action and Instructional Vision documents.

### **Response of the Visiting Team**

In the fall of 2023, the district developed a PK-12 portrait of a global citizen that outlines the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success. The portrait of a global citizen has been released to a small group of high school teachers who provided feedback on early versions of the attributes during the development process.

### **Standard2Principle9**

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

School's rating in the Summary Report:Implementing

### **Explanation from the School**

Middletown High School has grown exponentially in integrating technology to enhance and demonstrate student learning. The continuation of the 1:1 device program has fostered a growth mindset by increasing the confidence of both staff and students in technology literacy. In addition, the overarching use of Google Suite and other tools allows teachers and students the freedom to create and exchange products and projects that are more rigorous, performance-based, and student-directed. Technology-based courses have also increased and expanded, including robotics, aerospace, computer sciences, and web and video design.

### **Response of the Visiting Team**

Technology is a major facet of the culture for learners in Middletown High School. Every student across the school has access to a device, whether they use the device the school provides or choose to bring in their personal device. Students demonstrate ease of access by which they can access their class materials, whether they are in or out of school. Students use technology to conduct online research during class. There is a consistent learning management platform (Google Suite) used by the school. In addition, the Virtual Learning Academy provides struggling students with access to learning resources so they can complete their course requirements. Students receive written feedback in the form of comments left on their electronic submissions on Google Classroom. Students have the opportunity to revise their work based on the personalized feedback they receive and resubmit assignments.

# Commendations

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## Commendation

The creation of the draft portrait of a global citizen that outlines the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions that are necessary for their students to have future success and encompasses the priorities of the broader community

## Commendation

The inclusion of a robust group of broader community members, such as alumni, parents and families, and college admission officers, in the development of the portrait of a global citizen

## Commendation

The ongoing dialogue and discussion around curriculum in departments that are afforded common planning time

## Commendation

The school's focus on ensuring that all students have at least one adult in the school to connect with and its commitment to an advisory program where every student has the opportunity to build a relationship over their four years with an adult who can assist in helping him/her/they achieve the school's expectations for student learning

## Commendation

The incorporation of social-emotional instructional and learning practices into the advisory lessons

## Commendation

The number of interventions and supports, both academic and social-emotional, available at the school, and the ongoing efforts to proactively support at-risk students and support their transition to high school

## Commendation

The implementation of a social-emotional screener to proactively identify students in need of social-emotional support

## Commendation

The school's commitment to creating student voice and choice in their lessons and assessments



## **Commendation**

The use of data meeting time across multiple departments to reflect on student work, curriculum, and course audits despite a lack of a dedicated, formal school-wide data team protocol

## **Commendation**

The wide variety of opportunities provided to students to demonstrate their learning across various departments and programs

The authentic connections that educators promote to tie classroom content to real-world applications

The wide variety of strategies to assess student learning seen across multiple different classes, which offers differentiated ways to show student learning

The common assessments that are found across multiple departments that offer equitable learning experiences

The communication of learner expectations via rubrics to guide students' learning processes

The opportunities across the school that students have to revise and resubmit work to support the growth of their learning

# Additional Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Ensure all courses at all levels provide cognitively challenging and higher order thinking opportunities for students to promote deeper understanding

## Recommendation

Increase opportunities for students to experience learning outside of school

## Recommendation

Provide more consistent structures and expectations for timelines of resubmission and revision processes

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

A school's initial/continued Accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing the school's improvement/growth plan based on the Priority Areas validated by the visiting team and recommendations identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle.

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

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

The visiting team would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed a Self-Reflection that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need, hosted a Collaborative Conference, developed an improvement/growth plan, and completed a Summary Report. The time and effort dedicated to the Accreditation process, school improvement/growth, the Summary Report, and the preparation for the visit ensured a successful Initial/Decennial Accreditation visit.

# SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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## **NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Schools**

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

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

# Roster of Team Members

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## Chair(s)

**Chair: Dr. Anna Mahon** - Brookfield Public Schools

**Assistant Chair: Jade Gopie** -

## Team Members

**Mrs. Erica Baumgartner** - Waterford High School

**Marisa Christoff** - Nonnewaug High School

**Mr. Joseph Cozza** - Academy of Information Technology and Engineering

**Kim Perschmann** - Northwestern Regional High School

**Samantha Pinter** - Norwalk High School

**Stephanie Vivas** - Brookfield High School