

Mission and Expectations for Student Learning *Teaching and Learning Standard 1*

1.1 The current CHS Mission Statement was developed by a subset of the school community almost two decades ago, was approved by the high school community in 1995, and is now utilized by the current faculty, staff, and school board. During the mid-1990s, the Colchester School District hired a consulting firm to facilitate an intensive, district-wide Strategic Planning process. One of the purposes for this work was the drafting of a mission statement by stakeholders across the community—teachers, administrators, students, parents, non-parent community members, etc.

Colchester High School adopted this mission in 1995 while preparing for our last round of NEASC and this work was published in November of 1996. In 2004, under the administration of Armando Vilaseca, a K-12 initiative committee consisting of community members and various stake holders was formed to review the Mission Statement. After meeting approximately 15 times, it was decided that the Mission Statement would not be changed; however, the District developed and adopted a “District Vision” that was based on the Mission Statement. This District Vision is still in use today. A majority of our current school community was not involved in the development or approval of this mission, as they were not employed and working in the Colchester School District at the time of its inception. However, the Mission is supported by the faculty and staff in that much of the work they do is aligned with it. CHS’s commitment to differentiated instruction is aligned with our mission, and the faculty and staff are steeped in this work. The CHS community appears to understand the different parts of the Mission, and to support it in their work with students.

As part of our self-study, a survey was offered to CHS students, parents, staff and school board in the spring of 2009. The results indicated that, of those who responded, the majority of the CHS staff is familiar with and supports the Mission Statement. Slightly fewer, but still a majority of the parents who responded to the survey indicated that they are familiar with and support the mission statement. Of those responding to the survey, a minority of the CHS students indicated that they were familiar with the Mission Statement, although a firm majority indicated that they are familiar with the EEs.

At a recent school board meeting, the school board committed to a new visioning process that will gather all stakeholders to update the district's Mission Statement. This process will begin this month (January 2010). It is unclear whether this new process will lead to the revision of the high school's Mission Statement, or if our Mission Statement will stay the same. CHS's EEs have been created, revised, and adjusted over many years. This process has included teachers targeting specific standards of performance from the rubrics.

The CHS mission and expectations are currently accepted and supported by the CHS professional staff, students, and parents, but were not developed by the current CHS community. *The Mission Statement needs to be reviewed and, potentially, updated by a group that includes all stakeholders.* It is timely that the school board has begun a process that will include members of the CHS community to revisit and approve an updated mission.

1.2 The CHS Mission Statement is a somewhat historic representation of the community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning that is still acceptable to the professional staff and parents. Because the CHS Mission Statement was developed and revised over a decade ago, many of our current faculty and staff were not part of the 1990's

Strategic Planning Process. Part of the strategic planning process was to determine the school community's values and beliefs about student learning. The newer faculty and staff are very removed from the origins of the current Mission Statement. A majority of our current school community was not involved in the development or approval of our current Mission Statement.

The CHS Mission Statement encompasses and represents the values and beliefs that all students will develop necessary skills such as academic proficiency, social skill, and character to become fulfilled, responsible, and involved citizens. This philosophy is carried out by the school community's respect for individual needs, and the commitment to integrated learning, and by providing diverse and challenging educational experiences in partnership with families and the community. These beliefs have been a model for Colchester High School, and they have also become a goal for the other schools in the district in recent years.

In the NEASC self-study survey, a majority of responding staff indicated that the Mission Statement represents our fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. However, in a survey given to CHS faculty in the fall of 2009, 47 percent reported that the Mission Statement only "somewhat" represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. The remaining 53 percent of the respondents believed that the Mission Statement "completely" represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.

The current mission acceptably reflects a historically accurate view of the CHS community's values and beliefs about student learning. Current professional staff are able to relate to it abide by it. *However, the Mission Statement needs to be reviewed and, potentially, revised with input from all stakeholders, including newer members of the CHS community, regarding values and beliefs about student learning.*

1.3 CHS defines academic expectations in an exemplary way. Civic and social learning expectations are less clearly defined. The Mission Statement refers generally to “academic proficiency, social skill and character.” Academic expectations are objectively defined in the red course notebooks, EE Rubrics and KUDs.

Prior to Colchester’s most recent NEASC evaluation, the school implemented the “Red Notebook” system. This system requires that every course have academic learning expectations, including syllabus, curriculum, course expectations, and KUDs, compiled in a red notebook for that course. This allows for transparency throughout the school as to what learning should be taking place in any given class. In addition, the EE Rubrics define measurable indicators in the academic areas of Reading, Writing, Problem Solving, and Learning Habits. EE’s 4.4 and 4.5, and our Senior Civics Seminar have rubrics for civic and social expectations. Third, KUDs for each unit of study in each course can be found within the Red Notebooks, as well as on the shared drive. Through KUDs instructors clearly articulate in advance what their student’s desired learning outcomes will be. *While CHS has clearly defined academic expectations, the school’s civic and social requirements are less clearly defined. Civic and Social Expectations are not defined in a separate context of their own.*

1.4 Each of the CHS EEs has targeted levels of successful achievement identified in rubrics. These address the areas of reading, writing, problem solving, and learning habits across the curriculum. The faculty developed and revised the school-wide rubrics for academic expectations between 2005 and 2007.

During 2005-2006, the school community, including the professional staff, did rigorous work to examine the previously existing **nine** school-wide Essential Expectations, and identify and develop the four EEs that a CHS graduate should master. The rubrics were further reviewed,

refined, and finalized in 2007-2008 by a committee of volunteers from the CHS professional staff and the CHS Leadership Team. The academic expectations in the mission statement target the level of successful achievement for students in an exemplary way.

1.5 While opportunities for learning and growth in the civic and social realms are widespread in the CHS culture and curriculum, assessment in this area is limited.

Civic and Social expectations are embedded in the CHS Mission Statement, the CHS E.E.s, the CHS Belief Statements, as well as the Grade Expectations. The EEs and Belief Statements guide the development of curriculum and instruction at CHS. The CHS EEs 4.4 and 4.5 specifically assess positive social interactions with others.

Specific opportunities for Civic and Social learning include Senior Seminar, Civics, the Physical Education curriculum, Student Government, National Honor Society, the Red Cross Club, The Environmental Club, Mallets Bay Mentors, Options Credit for Community Service, Voter Registration, the H20 Club, and Green Mountain Teen Initiative. However, the EE rubrics do not currently assess their effectiveness.

While classes, activities, and clubs represent CHS's underlying values, CHS needs to develop and define indicators that specifically assess expectations for learning and growth, school wide, in the distinct areas of civic and social thinking and/or behaviors.

1.6 The Mission Statement and school's expectations for student learning guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and are evident throughout CHS's culture.

The process of revising the Mission Statement in 1995 was meant to ensure that student learning was centered on individual needs, integrated learning, and was fostering the essential expectations of the school. Now, in 2009, teachers are expected to align their instruction to these four expectations. Additionally, teachers use the EEs rubrics as part of their assessment of

student work, which further guides instruction. In this way, the mission has guided teachers' procedures, processes, and decisions around instruction.

The mission has guided instructional leadership in the scheduling of Diversity week every year, and encourages all academic and non-academic disciplines to create lessons plans which give more meaning to global and cultural issues. In addition, the mission also guides our instructional practice in the classroom, and all students are expected to reach their zone of proximal development through the use of differentiated instruction.

The mission guides the CHS community to nurture students to be "involved students", as is evidenced by student involvement in decision making at CHS. Students serve on a variety of committees and are represented on the school board. Students play a major role in the hiring of every teacher and coach at CHS. Prospective teachers are asked to create a relevant lesson for a specific class, then come and teach that lesson. The class is then surveyed to assess the prospective teacher's strengths. Students are also asked for their feedback on calendar issues, test-taking procedures and processes, incentive questions (i.e., what might help motivate future students with NECAP testing?), as well as developing school and classroom norms.

CHS's procedures, policies, processes, and decisions are aligned in an exemplary way with the Mission Statement and expectations for student learning. *There is currently no formal measure to assess to what extent the school's mission and expectations for student learning "deliberately" guide procedures, policies, processes, and decisions. It is unclear as to how and to what extent the Mission Statement and expectations for student learning are used as a deliberate guide.*

1.7– The CHS professional community has been limited in their regular reviews of the Mission Statement, but has done consistent, rigorous work with the expectations for student learning using a variety of data and research.

The last revision of CHS’s Mission Statement, which is the same as the mission statement for the Colchester School District, occurred in 1995. Its last review came in 2004, under former superintendent Armando Vilaseca, though no changes were made. According to Principal Amy Minor, past practice had been a review and revision of the mission approximately every ten years by committees made up of district administrators, teachers, and parents. Larry Waters, current Superintendent of Colchester School District, announced that the mission and vision plan for the Colchester School District will be reviewed later this year. The intention is to move toward a focus on 21st Century Learning Goals. The committee involved will be looking at transition documents and “roots of success”, which are recent documents published by the Department of Education. The mission review committee will be made up of administrators, educators, community members and students.

The Mission Statement has not been revised regularly; however, the EEs have been comprehensively reviewed and revised often per the recommendations of the 2000 NEASC report. During 2005-2006 the CHS community identified four EEs that a CHS graduate should master. Once the EEs were established, specific rubrics were developed that outline a total of 17 related descriptors. The rubrics were finalized in 2007-2008 and are available to all members of the school community on the shared drive of the school’s computer network. The CHS EEs were derived from state and national standards but are of a larger scope. In 2009-2010 EE posters were placed in every classroom and throughout the building. This is an ongoing process.

Colchester High School's learning expectations **are** our essential expectations. The EEs have been in a developmental process for about the last five years. The EEs have been reviewed and updated once a year over that five-year period. Over time we have clarified them, streamlined them and boiled them down to what we felt was most effective as learning tools.

The CHS mission statement has not been reviewed since 1995, and needs to be. There are plans in place to review it in 2010. Additionally, the EEs should be incorporated into the mission statement, as they have become integral at CHS.

Mission Statement

Executive Summary

The current CHS Mission Statement was developed in the mid-1990s by a group of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other community members. Although its origins date back a number of years, current faculty are able to relate to it and abide by it. The Mission Statement addresses fundamental values and beliefs about student learning that the majority of the school community still support. However, stakeholders have recognized the need to review and revisit the Mission. Along with revisiting long held values and beliefs, newer members of the CHS community need to have the opportunity to contribute input and feel ownership of the Mission. The school board has initiated a process that will gather all stakeholders to update the Mission.

School-wide academic expectations, or EEs, are clearly defined, measurable, and reflect the CHS Mission in an exemplary way. They also provide targeted levels of successful achievement across the curriculum. On the other hand, although there are a plethora of opportunities and required courses that have a focus on civic and social learning experiences, there are no measurable, school-wide indicators or benchmarks to assess student growth in these areas. CHS needs to develop systems to ensure all students are meeting the civic and social expectations in the Mission.

When the Mission Statement was developed, the driving belief was to ensure that student learning was centered on individual needs, integrated learning, and fostering the EEs. The Mission also guided leadership in its initial efforts to enhance student awareness of diversity through the creation and continued expansion of our annual celebration of Diversity Week. The Mission's reference to the development of "involved citizens" also set the stage for CHS to

amplify student involvement in many areas of policy development and decision making. At this time, it is clear that procedures, policies, and decisions of the school are well aligned with the Mission. However, it is unclear if the Mission actually serves as a guide for procedures, policies, and decisions.

The CHS professional community has done regular review and rigorous, ongoing revisions of the Expectations for Student Learning based on a variety of assessment data. This has resulted in stronger and more consistent instruction and assessment across the curriculum. CHS student performance on statewide tests has improved over the years, which may be a reflection of our focus on the EEs.

The Mission Statement has not been reviewed or revised on a regular schedule or timeline. This committee believes that it is timely that the school board has begun the process of reviewing the Mission and hopes that the results of the review will include a timeline for regular and ongoing revisits.

The Mission Committee believes that CHS deserves an acceptable rating for the CHS Mission and Expectations for Student Learning.

Mission Statement *Strengths & Needs*

Strengths:

- A majority of CHS faculty and parents are familiar with the Mission Statement and support it.
- In January of 2010, the School Board committed to gather input from all stakeholders to update the Mission Statement.
- The Mission Statement reflects a historically accurate view of the CHS community's values and beliefs about student learning.
- Academic expectations (“...proficiency...”) referred to in the Mission Statement are clearly defined in numerous ways with targeted levels of successful achievement.
- The Mission Statement sets the stage for respecting and responding to diversity and the unique strengths, needs, and differences of all CHS students.
- The Mission Statement puts forward our intent to have students be involved and active members of the school community.

Needs:

- Increase student familiarity with the Mission Statement.
- Review the Mission Statement and revise as needed.
- Involve a wide range of stakeholders, including newer faculty and staff members, in the review and revision of the Mission Statement.
- Civic and Social Learning Expectations are alluded to in the Mission Statement (“...social skill, and character... responsible and involved citizens...”), and as such, need to be clearly defined and measurable.
- Create a systematic process or timeline for regularly reviewing /revising the Mission Statement that includes a representative sample of all stakeholders.
- The Mission Statement should also address The EEs.

