Curriculum
Teaching and Learning Standard 2

2.1 Colchester High School has developed its own set of Essential Expectations (EEs) over the past four years. Most curriculum documents identify which EEs are addressed in which courses, but final responsibility for individual standards has not been identified. In a way this means that all curriculum areas feel responsible for all EEs, but it also means that no curriculum area has final responsibility for specific EEs. The KUD process currently under way will generate an inventory of what EEs are covered where, but there *is a need for school-wide coordination of EE responsibility among curriculum areas.*

2.2 Some curriculum is aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and ensures that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations. Most curriculum outlines in the form of KUDs are aligned with state standards. We are in the process of also connecting curricula to school-wide essential expectations (EEs). Because EEs are the shared responsibility of all departments, students have multiple cross-curriculum opportunities to practice and achieve the EEs. All courses address multiple EEs. *We are still in the process of clarifying which EEs are addressed and assessed in each department and developing a method of tracking student progress and achievement.*

The curriculum is mostly well aligned with the Essential Expectations (EEs). All courses are expected to build in practice for all of the EEs, and this is made explicit in the unit KUDs. The school has also aligned the KUDs with the statewide Grade Expectations (GEs). Since the EEs are the shared responsibility of every department, students have many opportunities to practice and achieve them. *The school does need to work toward establishing a system to ensure*

that every student achieves each EE at a high standard. This might be through a system of specific teams becoming responsible for some form of final assessment for different EEs.

There are ample support systems that exist within the school day to help students practice and achieve the EEs. All students have access to both the Writer's Workshop and the Math Lab and these resources are well used. Paraprofessionals are actively involved in many classes. There is an after-school Homework Club open for all students with a paraprofessional present. An organized EST provides personalized support to students referred by teachers or parents. Special educators provide direct instructional support through tutoring and study skill classes. During the summer incoming ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students continue to do assignments through the Humanities summer assignments that are aligned with the EEs.

2.3 Colchester High School has a "written" curriculum that prescribes content. Course curricula were developed, printed, and originally stored in Red Notebooks. With the advent of the network drives, the Red Notebooks have evolved into a course outline format, and the majority of people now look to the shared drive when planning for instruction. The network drive stores most course materials, from KUDs to syllabi to daily content, and all teachers have full access to their own department's course materials. Although the use of course materials located on the shared drive is not required, this is where teachers store, collaborate on, and work to prescribe content. The shared drive acts as a guide in the implementation of courses.

Four years ago we began developing school-wide learning expectations (Essential Expectations – EEs), and we are now working on integrating them into the written curriculum. The policy for including EEs into the curriculum is not completely articulated as of yet. At this point, the EEs with rubrics (as they exist currently) are one year old and different departments

are in different stages of implementation.   For example, there is a standard "Response to Text" rubric used to assess all humanities students which includes EE language.

The curriculum fully identifies course specific learning goals. The goal is to have course and unit level KUDs completed by the end of the 2009-2010 school year that are designed to guide each unit based on specific learning goals. KUDs have been linked to state GEs.

Instructional strategies are suggested through learning activities but rarely prescribed so that teachers have the flexibility to design and implement learning activities appropriate to student learning styles, readiness, and interest. Differentiated Instruction is a school-wide and now district-wide philosophy, but strategies vary from teacher to teacher and course to course.

Some KUDs list specific assessment techniques, including common assessments, while others offer more general assessment guidelines. Most commonly implemented assessments are summative in nature while formative assessments tend to vary. School-wide rubrics have been created. *The current work on integration, utilization, and assessment of EEs with rubrics needs to continue.*

2.4 The CHS curriculum engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking and provides many opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills. Colchester High School considers problem solving so central to our mission that it is one of our school's Essential Expectations.

Many courses in both the Blue House and the Green House require all students in the school to engage in inquiry, problem solving and higher-order thinking skills. Some examples would be Critter's Information Project, the Learning Styles Reading Log, the Science Essential

Topics presentations, the Coil Pot Project, the Tent Gateway, Literary Papers, Friday Culture Days, Psychology Case Study, Action Physics Bridge Project, and the High Ropes Course.

Many courses, including some that are graduation requirements, require students to demonstrate authentic applications of knowledge and skills. Some examples of authentic applications are the District Art Show, Vermont Energy Plan, the Heritage Project, Senior Seminar Service Learning Project, Model UN, the Poetry Slam, Trash on the Lawn Day, AP Biology Internship Presentations, AP Studio Art Artist Shadow Assignment, the Crossroads CHS Bookstore, and the Stock Market Game.

There is still a need to add more problem solving into our curriculum as well as more authentic applications by creating more integrated courses.

2.5 The curriculum offers pockets of integration and emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. The school is working towards full integration of the school-wide Essential Expectations. KUDs are being revised and modified to reflect and identify which courses are addressing which expectations. We have initiated a building-wide effort to transparently bring these to the students' attention through daily instruction, assignments, and assessments. Our ninth and tenth-grade humanities courses represent the strongest area of curricular integration as they are integrated English and social studies using the vehicle of history as a means for students to gain expertise in core reading and writing skills. This specifically allows students to explore themes, such as The American Dream, in depth. Other departments have emphasized vertical integration between sequential course offerings. Most curricula are constructed around essential questions and enduring understandings, providing a framework for

students to delve deeply into the core of each course. *Beyond humanities courses, we recognize the need for additional coordination and integration of curricular areas.*

2.6 CHS provides an acceptable variety of opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. Over the summer CHS provides the typical remedial summer school offerings for students who have experienced difficulty achieving success during the regular academic year. Additionally, however, CHS also offers opportunities for students to accelerate their learning by taking coursework to advance in a particular academic area.

In Senior Seminar, all students choose an issue and complete a service learning project that takes them beyond the walls of the school for research, interviews, and site visits. The AP Biology internship/job shadow program provides students in this class the opportunity to learn about a biologically related career on a job site under the supervision of people in the field. The CHS mentoring program offers students the opportunity to extend and expand their leadership skills by mentoring younger students in the district. Volunteer students from the high school are matched with students with special needs at one of the district's elementary schools. Mentors help with some school work, have lunch with their partners, go to P.E., and sometimes just visit. The Opportunities Program uses community-based internships, job coaching, apprenticeships, service learning, and paid employment to prepare students for meaningful career paths and employment in the future.

CHS provides alternative learning programs within the school and technical education programs off campus. Through Target Grad students who have not experienced success in the traditional school environment have the opportunity to work towards a diploma with the

supervision and guidance of a dedicated high school teacher. Students design a plan to complete graduation requirements, on a schedule that accommodates their life, and present their accomplishment of all EEs and state GEs through a portfolio that is reviewed and evaluated by the supervising teacher.

Colchester High School offers a wide variety of co-curricular learning opportunities including clubs, sports, musical performances and theatrical productions.

2.7 There is generally a limited level of curricular coordination and articulation between academic areas, a strong level within disciplines in the school, and limited curricular coordination with sending schools. As previously noted, within the school the KUDs and EEs are becoming the unifying principles for developing curriculum and guiding student assessment. Curriculum work at the high school takes place mostly at department meetings or informally between colleagues teaching the same course. Occasionally departments are compensated over the summer to work on curriculum. Our CWG structure also supports the opportunity for curricular coordination within departments and articulation within the high school, but the school hasn't capitalized on this as an inter-departmental process. Some academic areas, such as art, physical education and special education meet regularly with their colleagues in the district to discuss their curriculum and coordinate district-wide events, such as the annual Colchester School District Art Show.

The Colchester School District employs a curriculum coordinator and follows a rotating curriculum review cycle with each academic area district-wide, which is undertaken every 5-6 years. The revised curriculum for certain subjects is in the process of being published as a hard-copy document, or more recently is being published to the district and /or school websites where

it can be easily accessed by the community.   A very comprehensive K-12 Technology Skills curriculum is available on the district website; however, the district Science curriculum page is listed as "under construction" and the art curriculum, completed in February 2009, has not yet been posted on the website. *At this time, access to the district K-12 curriculum in each academic area is not readily available. Additionally, not all subjects have current revisions.*

Academic areas at Colchester High School have limited opportunities to coordinate curriculum with each other, and there is not a method in place to assess the effectiveness of the coordination that takes place. Teachers in different academic areas with common planning time available occasionally undertake curriculum coordination on a limited basis.   There is limited time available to coordinate within disciplines, but often departments use their department meeting time, common lunch time, or prep time to coordinate. *There is not a school-wide system in place to support efforts to coordinate curriculum between and among academic areas.*

There are few opportunities for Colchester High School faculty to coordinate curriculum with sending schools in the district. There are district wide documents that articulate the K-12 curriculum in each academic area, but little actual teacher to teacher coordination of curriculums with sending schools actually happens. What does occur is limited to infrequent and informal conversation. *There is not an effective method in place to assess the effectiveness of the coordination that takes place or a school-wide system to support efforts to coordinate curriculum between academic areas and sending schools.*

Students from CHS have the option to attend Burlington and Essex Technical centers. Guidance counselors and special educators spend considerable time coordinating transcripts and credit requirements for individual students who attend these programs.

In the 21st century classroom, access to the technology that puts vast resources at a teacher's fingertips is key to supporting the curriculum. The Colchester High School library/media center's resources, programs, and services are not effective in supporting the curriculum. It does not reflect the changing role of library/media centers as information literacy and technology support centers. *There is little coordination with and support of curriculum between the CHS library/media center and academic areas.*

2.8 Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.

Teachers order needed textbooks and supplies as budgetary constraints allow. Currently, there are an adequate number of updated textbooks in good repair, and teachers have sufficient supplies. Related materials such as student handbooks/agendas, portfolios, maps, kits, manipulatives, calculators, laboratory equipment and software are available for student use. Students who can't afford certain materials may borrow them from either the classroom supply or library.

The facilities are adequate to accommodate student numbers. The student to staff ratio is also adequate. Faculty has access to three mobile computer lab units for classroom instruction in addition to two computer laboratories. This allows up to five total classes to access computer technology per mod which is sometimes insufficient. The students, during free mods, have access to the two computer labs as space allows. Additionally, there are eight computers located in the library. Each classroom is equipped with one to three computers for student use. Faculty and staff members receive a school network and email account. Students receive a network

account provided parental permission is given through an acceptable use policy contract. The network account provides access to a myriad of software programs. *The school does not have sufficient technology to support student and curricular needs. The mobile units and the labs are often in greater demand than can be accommodated especially when large courses may coincide on more substantial assessments. In addition, the faculty does not receive adequate training or support in the use of the technology currently available. The school does not have a technology integration specialist. The IT staff is frequently called upon to assist faculty with technology questions.*

The library has a blend of resources that would seem to be capable of assisting in implementing the curriculum. However, teachers reported in the self-study that they do not find the physical resources of the library, such as books and computers, adequate to support course curricula, nor are there adequate personnel to reliably support curriculum development and implementation. Students report that they do not often use the library as a part of their class assignments. The library is used as a test center, a place for events that supplement the curriculum and a place where students can socialize while doing homework, but not frequently as an integral part of the curriculum. *The resources and staff of the CHS library could be more fully integrated into the curriculum of the school. The library does not live up to its potential as a source for technology, equipment, and training as an integrated media center.*

2.9 The professional staff at CHS have been actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum. For several years now CHS has been in the process of implementing a curriculum focused on the goals of Differentiated Instruction. This focus is school-wide and in keeping with the school's mission statement. Teachers have committed substantial professional development time to learning about DI and then have revised

the curriculum to implement the theory. Last year 2008-2009, the faculty used a considerable amount of our collective professional development time in Collaborative Work Groups that specifically worked toward using student assessments (both formative and summative) to continue the process of revising curriculum. This process involved examining student work to identify a specific cohort of students on which to focus. These students received specific attention via intervention strategies and were assessed again to determine the degree of success.

The school does not have a formal curriculum review cycle. Individuals or groups of teachers, including grade-level teams, may work on aspects of their course curricula based on student performance data. This generally happens as a grass roots process rather than being part of a planned review. A recent example of this is the process used that modified the old Asian Experience course into the current Thinkers and Revolutionaries in order to include Western thinkers.

Although the faculty has spent a considerable amount of time examining student work with an eye toward improving curriculum, most of this work has focused at the "sub-unit" level of instruction rather than taking a course or department view.

As part of our commitment to DI, teachers consistently use assessment data to improve educational planning. Most of what is used in this area consists of pre-assessments, portfolios, exhibitions, writing, department wide assessments and EEs. Within a particular school year formative, performance, and summative assessment data is used to identify individual student needs and guide planning to enable as many students as possible to achieve success. Culminating assessments provide summative data that can be used to adjust curriculum on a year to year basis. Review of NSRE test scores and, more recently, NECAP test scores has led to

increased professional development time during in-service days and time in team meetings devoting special attention to improving student performance in the areas of reading, writing and problem solving.

2.10 CHS personnel commit a great deal of time to the development of curriculum.
The district employs one curriculum coordinator to oversee all schools, grades K-12. Up until this year, there was a Teacher Liaison in the school who was primarily responsible for professional development. Much of the work done under this person's tutelage involved reflecting on and modifying curriculum. CHS has a Leadership Team that is, at least partly, involved in driving curriculum review and, by recent necessity, has absorbed professional development planning into its wide ranging purview.

Over the last three years, the faculty has been intimately involved with the application of DI principles to curriculum and the development of the EEs both through in-school time and summer professional development. For instance, more than 30 members of the CHS faculty participated in a course entitled *Stepping Back; Getting Ready to Differentiate More Deeply*. Considerable faculty meeting time was dedicated to CWG work that focused on specific areas of curriculum. The school-wide expectations for learning evolved through these processes and are now being used to drive curriculum development. This year, the faculty is continuing to write KUDs, that include EEs, for each unit of every course.

From the standpoint of using existing time for curriculum, the school is successful, mostly because of the dedication of the faculty. *Budgetary constraints have limited the financial resources available for curriculum work. The biggest loss recently has been the elimination of*

the Teacher Liaison position. The school now has neither an individual nor a group dedicated to the planning of professional development.

2.11 CHS professional development strongly supports the implementation of curriculum with fewer resources and less time for curriculum development. A considerable amount of in-service and faculty/department meeting time has involved high-quality, reflective activities focused on curriculum implementation. In this way, the faculty as a whole has made tremendous strides towards honing differentiated instruction skills. However, there is a sense that D.I. may need to be re-emphasized with special attention to ratcheting for the more ready cohorts and scaffolding for the less ready. Minimal professional development has been formally dedicated to reflection, evaluation, or development of curriculum content. The most common time for thoughtful examination of curriculum content has been summer curriculum hours. These seem to be doled out mostly based on needs as identified by standardized test scores. In recent years, this has meant that the limited dollars all go to a particular academic area, depending on test scores, leaving others to develop curriculum on their own. Review of NSRE test scores and, more recently, NECAP test scores has led to increased professional development time during in-service days and time in team meetings devoting special attention to improving student performance in the areas of reading, writing and problem solving. *CHS needs a system or plan for examining, reviewing, and modifying curriculum <u>content</u> on a regular basis.*

Curriculum

Executive Summary

Colchester High School has developed its own set of academic standards identifying four fundamental EEs which reflect the school's mission: Reading, Writing, Problem Solving and Learning Habits. The CHS curriculum can be found in the Red Notebooks and the shared drive in the form of KUDs and course rubrics. The curriculum is aligned with the State standards and in the process of connecting to our school EEs. Students have access to extensive ancillary supports within the school day to help them achieve the EEs. A major goal for our school and district has been to implement Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated Instruction has shaped our curriculum development for the past several years. Teachers have the flexibility to design and implement learning activities appropriate to student learning styles, interest and readiness levels.

The CHS curriculum engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order thinking and provides many opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills. Colchester High School considers problem solving so central to our mission that it is one of our school's Essential Expectations. Many courses in both the Blue House and Green House require all students in the school to engage in inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking skills. Students demonstrate authentic application of knowledge and skills in a variety of courses.

The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. Most curricula are constructed around essential questions and enduring understandings.

CHS provides an acceptable variety of opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. These include alternative programs, technical programs, target graduation, co-curricular activities, dual enrollment, and internships.

There is generally a low level of curricular coordination and articulation between academic areas, a strong level within disciplines in the school, and limited curricular coordination with sending schools. CHS personnel commit a great deal of time to the development of curriculum using instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies and facilities which are sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum. However, the resources of the library/media center such as books and computers are not adequate to support course curriculum.

Over the past three years, the faculty has been intensively involved with the application of DI principles to curriculum and the development of the EEs both through in-school time and summer professional development. However, funding of professional development has become scarce and with the loss of our teacher liaison there has been a decrease in curriculum coordination and professional development.

The Curriculum Standard committee believes Colchester High School's curriculum merits an <u>Acceptable</u> rating.

Curriculum

Strengths and Needs

Strengths:

- School-wide Essential Expectations reflect the school's mission.

- Ongoing implementation of Differentiated Instruction.

- Engaging and relevant curriculum based on student feedback.

- Development of KUDs for each course and unit.

- Students engage in inquiry, problem solving and higher-order thinking skills.

- Students have opportunities for authentic applications of knowledge and skills.

- Curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.

- There are a variety of educational opportunities beyond the normal course offerings and/or away from the school campus.

- A staff that is active in development, evaluation and revision of curriculum.

Needs:

- Continue the process of clarifying which EEs are addressed and assessed in each curricular area.

- Develop a method of tracking student progress and achievement of EEs.

- Establish a system which ensures each student is achieving each EE at a high standard.

- Continue to fully integrate and assess school-wide EEs.

- Coordinate and articulate curriculum between academic areas and sending schools.

- Ensure sufficient technology to support curricular needs.

- Add a technology integration specialist.

- Dedicate time and resources to library/media center and its staff to provide support in the implementation of curriculum.

- Re-gain the Teacher Liaison position to coordinate and support professional development and curriculum development.

- Establish a plan to examine, review and modify curriculum content on a regular basis.

- Create a system to support efforts to coordinate curriculum between curricular areas and to encourage more integration of curricular areas.