

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

Commission on Public Schools



Commission on Public Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
Reading Memorial High School**

Reading, MA

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School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) is a part of the Reading Public Schools system located in Reading, Massachusetts. Reading is an upper-middle-class community located north of Boston. Many adults in the community commute into the city of Boston for work. Within the district, 8.9 percent of the students are considered “economically disadvantaged” by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) while 9 percent of the high school's population is considered economically disadvantaged.

The school district is composed of the following races/ethnicities:

White: 86.2 percent

Asian: 5.3 percent

African American: 2.5 percent

Hispanic: 3.3 percent

Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic: 2.5 percent

Native American: 0.1 percent

Within the district, there is one preschool, five elementary schools, two middle schools, and Reading Memorial High School. RMHS consists of grades 9 - 12, with 1,222 students in total, with the following grade level totals for the 2020-2021 school year.

Grade 9: 299

Grade 10: 301

Grade 11: 292

Grade 12: 330

The enrollment percentages by race/ethnicity for RMHS is as follows:

White: 87.1 percent

Asian: 5.5 percent

African American: 2.7 percent

Hispanic: 2.5 percent

Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic: 2.0 percent

Native American: 0.2 percent

The enrollment stability for RMHS is 99.5 percent. All demographic groups including Economically Disadvantaged, High Needs, LEP English Language Learner, Students with Disability, and race/ethnicity groups have enrollment stability percentages above 95 percent.

The expenditure per pupil for students assigned to the school in 2018, which is the most recent information available from DESE in relation to state average is \$14,202 in the district. The state average is \$16,495. Below is a summary of Revenue for the FY21 budget– these numbers do change throughout the year so this is a snapshot at a point in time.

Total Available revenues \$105,857,140

Total Accom. Costs 39,097,646

Total Operating Budgets \$ 66,715,643

Operating budget breakdown:

Town Operating 35.8 percent

School Operating 64.2 percent

As of 2019, 98.8 percent of all students graduated in four years. All demographic groups graduate at a rate of 95 percent or more. It is also worth noting that in the 2018-2019 school year, no students dropped out.

During the 2019-2020 academic year RMHS had a 95.8 percent attendance rate where students have an average of 4.6 absences per year.

9.5 percent of students are absent 10 days or more and 6.3 percent of students are considered to have chronic absences, meaning they miss 10 percent of days or more.

It is important to note that only .2 percent of students have unexcused absences that total 9 or more days. This recent attendance data was influenced by the school closure caused by the COVID-19 school closures from March through June 2020.

Overall, students at RMHS are generally on the path to a four-year college. COVID-19 had a significant impact on students choosing to attend a four-year college, with the percentage going down compared to prior years.

For the Class of 2020, 79.6 percent of students went on to attend a four-year college, 5 percent went on to attend a two-year college, 3 percent attended a technical school and 4 percent went into the workforce. Students at Reading Memorial High School have access to local educational opportunities through the Middlesex Community College dual enrollment program, technical programs at the local vocational school, and local internship opportunities. Pre-COVID RMHS offered a rich selection of service-learning trips, which the school intends to resume once health metrics allow.

Each year, the Reading Memorial High School Guidance department hosts a college fair where approximately 120 college admissions representatives are invited to promote their institution. Moving forward, the guidance department will be expanding this fair to include college as well as career opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and gap year information. In January 2020, RMHS hosted our first GAP year fair, which was very well attended by students and families from Reading as well as surrounding towns. Additionally, college admissions representatives visited RMHS virtually all throughout the fall to meet with prospective students. This year, these meetings took place virtually over zoom and the counseling department hosted several successful college panels that were open to many more families than a typical year because they were hosted on zoom. Reading Memorial High School continues to work on collaborating with local business partnerships through the senior internship program offered during the fourth quarter of a student's senior year following COVID-19 protocols and has 10 students participating in the DESE sponsored tutoring paid internship for Quarter 4. The Reading Cooperative Bank also houses a branch in the lower level of Reading Memorial High School providing students with the opportunity to work in the bank for a block within their scheduled school day. The Reading Co-Op Bank also hosts a financial fair for students each June, exposing them to the world of balancing a budget. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the bank branch was not open this year but plans to re-open for the 2021-2022 school year and also resume the financial fair.

Reading Memorial High School is also supported through the ongoing work and collaboration with Reading Education Foundation that supports educators through grant funding. The Reading PTO also provides students and faculty with opportunities to run events, field trips, and scholarships for students.

At RMHS we have several types of positive student recognition programs. Firstly, we promote our Core Values of **Respect**, **Responsibility**, **Perseverance**, and **Scholarship** by nominating Students of the Month in our Core Value categories. Each month a Core Value is selected and students from each grade are selected as exemplary students in regards to the Core Value. We also recognize our current seniors with a weekly **High Five**. Each week, two students are selected from the senior to class to recognize them for their exemplary work inside and outside of the classroom. These students promote the spirit of being a Reading Rocket in their community service and other extracurricular activities. Graduating seniors (and some underclassmen) are also recognized with Book Awards. These students are nominated by staff and building leaders. Students are also inducted into student recognition groups such as the National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, and the Century Club.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate

Portrait of a Graduate

Reading Public Schools

RPS Graduates are leaders of their own learning journey who demonstrate kindness and empathy towards others and a commitment to wellness. They persevere through challenges, embrace multiple perspectives, and aspire to be their best selves in the service of others to better our community and our world.

Learn - Grow - Teach

RPS Graduates are critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. They take ownership of their learning journey and are open to struggle to foster personal growth. They are confident in their beliefs and consider the thoughts and ideas of others. They embrace collaboration to help teach others and remain curious life-long learners.

Empathize - Consider Perspectives - Practice Communal Care

RPS Graduates show kindness and empathy towards others and a commitment to personal wellness and communal care. They are able to persevere through challenges and demonstrate resilience. They authentically reflect through hearing and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and needs of people around them. To navigate relationships with generosity and patience, they listen actively and compassionately.

Engage - Serve - Thrive

RPS Graduates responsibly shape our world through collaboration with their community. They engage with and communicate multiple perspectives; aspire to be their best selves in the service of others in order to thrive, and bring their skills and knowledge to action for the benefit of each other and our world.

Beliefs about Learning and Core Values

The primary goal of Reading Memorial High School is the preparation of students to be literate, skilled, creative, healthy, competent and informed citizens-appreciative of the arts; capable of critical thinking and problem-solving; and able to function intellectually, emotionally and physically within a complex, interdependent and pluralistic world.

The Core Values that guide all members of the RMHS Community and all of our actions and decisions are:

- RESPECT
- RESPONSIBILITY
- PERSEVERANCE
- SCHOLARSHIP

As educators, we believe our work centers on the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of intellectual, emotional and physical well-being. We help our students enhance their ability to think by teaching the symbols and concepts through which thought, and creativity take place, and by developing the skills for using those symbols and concepts. The uses of intelligence with which we are concerned include critical thinking, observing, information gathering, processing and evaluating, listening, logic, computation, oral and written communication, and the application of these skills in decision-making and problem solving. We help our students by imparting knowledge of their bodies and providing opportunities for physical activity.

We believe that a positive learning community:

- is safe, caring, consistent, fair, flexible, open and democratic.

- meets the needs of all students through educational programs that promote individual fulfillment in a variety of ways as well as encompasses the complex interdependence of the world and the community.
- achieves educational excellence in an environment which promotes the free and open exchange of ideas; encourages mutual respect, creative expression and problem-solving skills; fosters human dignity; and recognizes and respects racial, ethnic, cultural and sexual differences.
- promotes individuality; nurtures self-esteem, health and well-being; and encourages participation in a democratic society.

We believe that the education of our young people is the shared responsibility of the school, student, family and community.

[Portrait of the Graduate](#)

LEARNING CULTURE

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

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

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

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

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.

Foundational Element 1.1a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.1a

Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) community provides a safe learning environment. Overwhelmingly students, parents, and staff feel physically safe at school. Security measures are in place in all classrooms such as a security backpack and posted emergency and evacuation directions. Exterior doors are locked during the school day and all school members, including visitors, wear identification badges. Ninety percent of students reported they know what to do in a crisis on the NEASC survey. In addition, 94.7 percent of the students are confident that the adults in the building know how to handle emergencies that may arise. ALICE training and mandated safety training is held annually for all district employees. Video cameras are strategically placed on the school campus to assist with security. The school's school resource officer (SRO) is routinely seen walking the halls. The school department employs both a custodial staff and a cleaning company to ensure that the school is well maintained and issues are fixed in a timely manner continuing the school's efforts to provide a safe learning environment. Students indicate that they have adults within the school community that they can go to for help when needed and that there are many ways that they feel connected to the school. Since the collaborative conference, the district has implemented a security project resulting in the installation of an improved and more thorough camera system throughout the building as well as key card access for some staff, which will be expanded. The school in partnership with the district implemented health and safety mitigation measures to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 including a mask mandate, protocols for contact tracing, reinforcing proper hygiene, social distancing measuring including spacing desks, and pooled testing.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 1.2a - Learning Culture

Foundational Element 1.2a

Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) has a written statement found on its school website and in the student handbook that contains a statement that indicates the core values and beliefs of the school. This written statement is not known by all staff but the core values of the school are known and vocalized by not only the staff but also the students. It is evident that the school community has identified its core values and is taking steps to ensure that these values are pervasive throughout the school; driving decisions and actions for the entire school community. The school engaged in a rich and productive process from the fall of 2019 through the winter of 2021 to develop an inclusive Portrait of the Graduate that will be implemented pre-K through 12. The school committee, Portrait of the Graduate Design Team, and District Leadership Team unanimously approved the Portrait, which was also universally approved by RMHS staff. The next steps are to bring the Portrait work to the younger grades in the district as well as to create a visual that captures the essence of the POG. Further work is to unpack the Portrait of the Graduate in the operations, procedure, policies, curriculum, and instruction of RMHS.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 2.2a - Student Learning

Foundational Element 2.2a

RMHS department heads and teachers in collaboration with the building principal and assistant superintendent wrote and published curriculum guides for all courses offered at the high school in a consistent format shared by all departments, which were published and shared with the School Committee in December of 2020. After curriculum guides are completed, RMHS will develop and, in some cases, update curriculum maps and common units in a format to be determined. One proposed direction is to create more thorough unit plans and guides using the Universal Design for Learning Framework.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 3.1a - Professional Practices

Foundational Element 3.1a

Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) has a current improvement/growth plan that was developed in 2018 by the current principal and updated in both 2019 and 2020 with the unique situation created by the pandemic. The school has had as its focus: 1. Creation of the Portrait of the Graduate, 2. Equity and Inclusive Instructional Practices, 3. Social-Emotional Learning and 4. Adjusting to Remote/Hybrid Learning Model. The district has provided rich professional development opportunities in all of these areas.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Elements 4.1a - Learning Support

Foundational Elements 4.1a

Students at Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) have access to appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success. Through weekly CASEL meetings, counselors collaborate with administration, health services, and special education staff to identify at-risk students who are in need of additional support. Students identified as needing additional assistance will be considered for interventions that take place during a weekly flex block period, DCAP accommodations, 504 plans, or IEP eligibility. During the 2018-19 school year, the principal in collaboration with the guidance director and leadership team created an updated and streamlined SST process to better identify students in need in a case management approach. In addition, counselors were provided training in 504 accommodations and the 504 process to better serve students on their caseloads. During the 2020-21 academic year, district special education administrators and high school administration began meeting on a weekly basis to discuss special education program as well as specific high-level student specific issues to provide improved services to students in a more proactive manner. One example is Reading Memorial High School's partnership with Recovery High, supported by the district, where several students have been very successful.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Foundational Element 5.1a - Learning Resources

Foundational Element 5.1a

The school site and plant at Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services. The town of Reading committed to a major remodeling project of the school in 2003. Portions of the building were torn down and rebuilt and other sections were completely remodeled. The result is a state-of-the-art facility that supports the delivery of curriculum, meets the needs of students and teachers, and is safe and well-maintained. The building air system was upgraded to the MERV-13 filters during the fall and winter of 2020-21 in keeping with health guidelines around Covid-19. In addition, the school has hand sanitizers stationed around the building, a spray cleaning solution for each classroom, and a deep disinfecting clean that takes place every Friday per Covid-19 health guidelines. One area of staff concern is the lack of air conditioning or ventilation in most classroom spaces that negatively impact teaching and learning especially on the upper floors where temperature can easily reach well over 90 degrees.

Rating

Meets the Standard

Priority Area 1

Priority Area

The Development of a Portrait of the Graduate to meet Foundational Element 1.2a - The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

Action, Impact, and Growth

RMHS has developed a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. Although the school does have a portrait of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success, it does not yet provide feedback to learners and their families on each learner's progress in achieving these goals (Standards 1.2a, 2.1).

Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) has a document describing its core values that was established in 2015. In the spring of 2019, the school in partnership with schools across the district began a collaborative and inclusive process of developing a pre-K through 12 "portrait" of the Reading Public Schools graduate. Members of the NEASC steering committee attended a two-day training sponsored by NEASC on how to develop the portrait of the graduate in a meaningful way. Over the summer of 2019, a Portrait of the Graduate Design Team was selected including representative stakeholders from the town, business, parents, clergy, staff, and students. These stakeholders seemed genuinely satisfied with the level of input and voice they were allowed throughout the development and adoption process; however, there were no students from Boston who attend RMHS through the METCO program on the design team despite the principal's efforts to bring one on board.

Design team work took place at various times throughout the fall and winter of 2019 and the group used the film *Most Likely to Succeed* as a vehicle for launching the conversation across the district and in the greater community. The film was shown to the administration, the design team, school leadership, staff, and the community. A survey followed each viewing. In January and early February of 2020, the design team met again to begin to identify themes that emerged from the survey data of various groups.

Interrupted by the pandemic, this process resumed in November of 2020 focused on developing meaningful and inclusive language for the new Portrait of the Graduate (PoG). The team shared the major themes with the community in a survey to elicit additional feedback in multiple meetings with stakeholders after which revisions were made. Information regarding the new PoG was communicated to students, parents, and the greater community via a survey and newsletter early in 2021. In this way, an effort was made to ensure that this process was purposeful and the new PoG and the existing core values complement each other.

A final draft of the PoG was voted on and approved by RMHS staff, the Design Team, and the school committee in March 2021.

Stakeholders said the new PoG effectively portrays the RMHS student "as a person" to the benefit of the school community and encouraged students to "carry forward" their learning to life after high school. "We thought about how we want our students to understand what it means to be a contributing member of a community," one stakeholder said, while another explained that the process was focused on "the whole child" and its "ties in with our health and wellness curriculum as well as what our guidance department teaches."

Going forward, the impact of the collaborative effort on the members of the Portrait of the Graduate Design Team was evident. Each member of the team was able to articulate and point to specific examples of the relevance of their work together. One stakeholder said, "We hope this will empower teachers. We must put structures in place that allow teachers to be creative and students to be curious and take risks." Another stakeholder, a member of the school's RMHS Staff and Teachers Against Racism (STAR) explained how they "want the POG to be open to struggle. Name the struggle and learn from it." Not only did the two-year collaborative effort benefit participants,

but it may serve to benefit both the school and the community in the years to come: “This is a great model for future collaborative efforts between the district and the community going forward,” exclaimed another member of the design team.

Planned for the future is more effective communication to the high school community of the PoG and its implications for student learning and wellbeing going forward. “We need to unpack the PoG,” said one stakeholder, “and see it in our classrooms, our hallways, and our schedule.” Students will be asked to participate in this process via a contest in which they will be challenged to create media representing the PoG, “How aware are other students,” asked one stakeholder. “How do we get them behind it?”

According to the current principal, administrators are considering a student assembly this year to help communicate the details of the new PoG. Students on the design team, in particular, hope that the PoG will instill and empower “communal care,” encouraging school community members to “embrace the differences” and “carry it forward” with them in their lives after RMHS. A broader community rollout of the PoG was also discussed including other constituents in the Reading community, Boston, and at local colleges and universities.

Still, more needs to be done with respect to the impact of the PoG on the school community as a whole—teachers, students, and school and district-level administrators. Although some stakeholders see the elements of the portrait as “empowering teachers to build on,” there is no plan as of yet to establish a framework in which this will happen. Similarly, although a handful of students has been actively involved in the development and launch of the PoG—one of whom, hopefully, referred to it as “the backbone of the community”—the general student body seemed largely unaware of it. They could discuss aspects of the core values of their school but not the PoG in particular: “Respect is just a given,” said one junior, and an RMHS student is one who “puts themselves before others,” said another former special education student who said they were “never made to feel different” in school—i.e., respect, perseverance. From an administrative perspective, several school leaders used the metaphor of the PoG being the school/district’s “North Star”; if that is to be the case, more strategic planning with respect to how to provide feedback to learners and their families on each learner’s progress in achieving these goals is necessary if it is to truly guide generations of diverse learners as they navigate the landscape of RMHS.

In this light, the students, teachers, and administrators of Reading Memorial High School along with their district colleagues and other stakeholders as a whole have crafted a nuanced and compelling Portrait of the Graduate that should easily serve as the “stimulus and inspiration” for positive cultural change in the immediate future, as one stakeholder put it. Still, as with any great transformation, there is still a lot left for the school community to do before this change can begin in earnest and with its success a certainty. Otherwise, the PoG risks becoming just another poster on classroom walls that does not “live” in its students: existing but not inspiring them all to learn, grow, and teach; empathize, consider perspectives, and practice communal care; and engage, serve and, ultimately, thrive.

Recommended Next Steps

- Design a wide-spread rollout of the Portrait of the Graduate communicating its language and purpose to students, parents, and the community
- Create a definition of proficiency for each indicator of the Portrait of the Graduate that will be accessible to students, and ensure students participate in this process
- Determine and communicate where in the curriculum students will have opportunities to practice and master the skills in the Portrait of the Graduate
- Identify and develop methods to assess the Portrait of the Graduate skills using student-centered language and identify levels of proficiency
- Ensure that all lesson plan objectives and learning targets are connected to and are driven by the Portrait of a Graduate.
- Determine and implement an inclusive process for how students will be regularly assessed on the skills in the Portrait of the Graduate based on the school-wide definitions of proficiency

- Build upon the collaborative Real-World Problem Solving course and develop an individualized, culminating assessment—e.g., portfolio, senior project, or capstone project—built on student voice and choice for all students to reflect on and measure their level of proficiency of the skills in the Portrait of the Graduate

Sources of Evidence

- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school summary report
- student work
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 2

Priority Area

Develop a school culture that aligns with Standard 1.1 - The school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity in identity, thought, and action.

Action, Impact, and Growth

Reading Memorial High School and the town of Reading has experienced significant challenges over the past five to seven years that greatly impacted school culture and feelings of safety and belonging, including:

- Antisemitic, racist, and homophobic graffiti
- Vandalism to the school's restrooms and public spaces, including a fire in a bathroom trash can
- A deterioration in respectful public discourse due in part to differing political viewpoints nationally and locally

Much of what has been experienced at RMHS is influenced by and present within the greater Reading community as well as in national political and social trends. Another significant challenge to creating and sustaining a positive school culture has been ineffective leadership and a high rate of turnover among school and district leaders. When the current principal began in 2018, there had been 4 principals in 10 years and there was a deep level of relational distrust amongst the faculty, demonstrating the need to heal and come together as a school community. The level of trust within the staff at RMHS has improved over the past three years, however, there is still room for growth. Many teachers report feeling supported by their department heads. Teachers have strong relationships with each other within each department. However, across departments, teachers feel that there is a lack of community. Department heads themselves are a tight-knit group of people, but there are challenges within the leadership district-wide. Inequities exist throughout the different leadership roles. Specifically, department heads feel that they are stretched too thin and are exhausted. They want clarification on their role and responsibilities as department heads.

Knowing this, the current principal joined the RMHS team in 2018 and took several steps she believed would improve school culture. School leaders organized a team-building activity for staff in cross-departmental groups on the first day for teachers. Potluck lunches were hosted at the beginning and end of the school year, where all staff members were welcome. A Community Day for the first day back for students was organized. Staff meetings were relocated from the Performing Arts Center to the library, a much more intimate and welcoming space.

To address the deeper issues of equity, bias, and racism, the principal supported RMHS in beginning the process of deep reflection regarding its beliefs, values, and practices. Following the graffiti incidents, several actions took place that represented a school-community partnership. The first was a very powerful and well-attended candlelight vigil that took place in early November 2018, where the community came together to express what Reading and RMHS stand for. Over 500 people came, read speeches and poems, sang songs, and committed to equity and anti-bias work. The second was a unique partnership between the Reading Public Library and RMHS to host "The Pulse of RMHS Conversations," which was an offshoot of conversations the town of Reading has been having about equity, race, and civil discourse. There was one student conversation hosted at RMHS in the fall of 2018 using the difficult conversation protocol and two conversations at RMHS in the spring of 2019 each using a world cafe style protocol. Student data was gathered and themes were identified and shared on a display board for the school to see. A similar protocol was used for staff at the start of the school year in August of 2019. The data generated from these conversations helped inform some of the elements of the school improvement plans.

The principal established protocols for communication to clearly articulate to staff and families of students who to speak to when requiring assistance. She also proposed and adopted meeting and discussion norms for staff meetings that have been followed with fidelity. A clear agenda is created for each staff meeting, which starts and

ends on time. "Shout Outs" are used at staff meetings as a way to recognize colleagues for their exceptional work day in and day out. The principal sends out a weekly newsletter to the school community. She meets monthly with the Reading Teachers Association representative to open lines of communication and build trust. She also meets weekly with department heads and other members of the leadership team to clarify the school's vision and purpose and build trust among department heads. In support of creating an inclusive environment for all students and staff, the new principal encouraged equity audits for the curriculum. Teachers reported that their principal has worked hard to support the celebration of diversity in the school. She focuses on bringing issues to light, emphasizing the importance of openly discussing problems by leading courageous conversations.

Still, in spite of these efforts, teachers believe that not all of their colleagues are open and receptive to change. They feel that the school culture among the adults is "every man for himself." One teacher described the school culture as fractured and said that they were desperate to find ways to heal and move forward as a community. Furthermore, the tenor of discourse in the greater Reading community has continued down a negative path which has created division and distrust between the school and various constituent groups in the community. Trust does not always exist between educators and the central office administration. Some teachers, specifically those that are a part of RMHS Staff and Teachers Against Racism (STAR), feel that central office administration pay more care and attention to certain groups within the greater community who let their voices be heard and do not afford the same opportunities to other voices in the community or within the school. The RMHS METCO director, one of the few people of color represented on the school staff, said "I have yet to be in a community forum in which black and brown students or LGBTQ+ students have been represented, but I have been to meetings where the students of law enforcement officers have been represented and their concerns are addressed." Many educators at RMHS want to make positive changes to create a more inclusive and equitable school community. Unfortunately, they don't believe that the central office administration is listening to them, nor do they trust that they will take any action to make the necessary changes. An anonymous group of community members has made it very clear that they do not want teachers speaking to students about significant current events that involve race. These sentiments became known after historic national events this past school year. Leaders and teachers at the school have experienced targeted harassment from community members as they try to address issues of racism, antisemitism, and homophobia to make the school a welcoming place for all. The superintendent and school committee have not publically supported the efforts of the high school administration and faculty to address issues of race, bias, and inequities, leading to an atmosphere of distrust.

In addition, English Language Learners are not receiving the support they need to succeed in classes that are taught in English. This is an equity issue for these students because there is not adequate staff in place to support the ELL population in their classes where English is spoken exclusively. Most concerning is the fact that there are very few staff members who are Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC) and that BIPOC students are underrepresented in upper-level classes and have expressed a level of frustration and disconnect, not always feeling welcome or represented in the curriculum at RMHS. Students would like to see diverse representation in the faculty. They also want BIPOC represented in the curriculum and for BIPOC students to have a voice in the school. Students feel that teachers support open and diverse conversations in their classrooms. Productive discourse is encouraged and teachers do a good job at making sure every students' voice is heard. Students report that their classmates are respectful of one another during these difficult conversations.

Students at RMHS report that they trust their teachers and feel safe with them. Teachers have shown their students that they care about them as individuals and want to get to know them outside of academic settings. Teachers are supportive of their students and look out for them. Many students reported feeling that they are included in the school community and that there is a club or a team to which they belong. However, not all students feel included. Students of color and LGTBQ+ students have felt isolated. They report that the Reading School District ignores their differences and acts ignorant rather than trying to understand them. The students who reported feeling this way don't believe that the school leadership is taking any action to resolve these issues. A student representative of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance told the story of being told by a school leader that they would attend every GSA meeting during the school year. However, disappointing to the student, the administrator never followed through with their promise.

In recent years, despite the fractures in the school community, there has been an emphasis on wellness, trauma-informed instructional practices, and social-emotional learning as well as equity, anti-bias, and anti-racist

education. The leadership team has implemented a robust 8th to 9th-grade transition through the use of Rocket Ambassadors. Rocket Ambassadors are stand-out students entering their senior year of high school. They meet with incoming freshmen before school starts in the fall to show them around the school and answer all of their questions. In an effort to understand the school culture, The Culture Triage Survey was administered in January 2019 to staff. The survey gave insight into what steps could be taken to creating a positive, respectful school culture. The PRIDE survey was implemented in 2018 and was intended to be administered in 2020 but was unable to happen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey was implemented in 2019 and will be implemented in April of 2021 for all students.

The school began a consolidation of ability levels (i.e., level collapsing) in the 2017-18 school year that has continued to progress. Currently, throughout the school, there are two main ability levels and Advanced Placement classes, with the exception of World Language. Next year, all the entry World Language classes will be heterogeneous opening up opportunities for all students to access World Language. The principal values heterogeneous classes and inclusivity. Teachers in the school are having a difficult time with the transition to fewer leveled classes. They want to be supported in their efforts to differentiate class materials and assessments. In an effort to support teachers who teach a variety of learners, professional development about Universal Design for Learning has been initiated. Despite this initiative, teachers have expressed their desire for more professional development on differentiation. Students' experience in the lower level classes has been that the expectations from the teachers are low and that there is not much productivity.

Regarding curriculum and course offerings, since 2018 there has been a consistent focus on professional development offerings on equity, inclusion, anti-bias, and anti-racist education and leadership; with wellness incorporated as well. The social studies department at RMHS currently has a Facing History and Ourselves course and is considering making the course a graduation requirement. The social studies department is also working to incorporate civics components into its curriculum. The department has secured a three-year full access license to Brown University Choices Program through a grant from the Reading Education Foundation. Grade 10 history classes are piloting the book "Stamped: Racism, Anti Racism, and You". The Grade 11 Health electives have been reworked to include a Social Justice Nutrition Course/Nourish Curriculum and Peer Leadership. RMHS is adding unified health and physical education to its curriculum. In the English Department, there is a senior elective course titled Diverse Voices. A journalism class was added in the English Department in fall 2020 that has created a robust school news website written for and by students. The English department is reviewing diverse texts and formulating a plan to pilot texts in the English Language Arts curriculum. The math department is intentionally making an effort to be more explicit in identifying BIPOC contributions to math. Globally, RMHS is examining how students are recommended for upper-level classes and engaging in reflection around the curriculum and instructional practices. Department heads are leading this initiative with their teachers through department meetings and following up at leadership meetings.

One theme to note is that RMHS has a long history of students engaging in service to others that has only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has sports teams that give back to the community, new clubs that have been created specifically for service that have made donations to area food pantries and women's shelters, and current clubs have engaged in Thank You campaigns for first responders and donation drives for soldiers. Individual students have single-handedly led drives to help with chronic hunger, build desks for area schools to help with social distancing, and raise funds and awareness for school nurses. Many of these students have been recognized regionally as local heroes. We The Youth is a student-led group focused on solving social injustices in their community. Since the summer of 2020, when the group was formed, We The Youth has hosted a poetry event for young people of color to express themselves. The group has participated in the March of Our Lives event that fought for education reform. And most recently, they have completed a mission-based project that gathered donations of personal protective equipment to give to homeless shelters in urban communities. The students who started We The Youth felt that there was a lot of talk among the adults in the school but no action was ever taken. They wanted to create change and make the school a more equitable environment.

Looking ahead, a committee of teachers has formed and is calling themselves the "Welcome Back" committee. They are planning welcome back activities for when RMHS returns to school fully in person on April 26th as well as for when students return to school in the fall. Ideas such as spirit week, DJ of the day to play music during passing time, goodie bags for students with Reading Rockets swag, decorations and welcome back signs, a

classroom door decorating contest, and themed games or competitions are some of the ideas the committee has to bring back a sense of community as students all return to school.

Despite the ongoing concerns at RMHS with respect to inclusivity and equity regarding BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, the school perseveres in its effort to provide “a safe, positive, respectful and inclusive culture that ensures equity and honors diversity.” Students, teachers, and school leaders are open and honest about the obstacles and mindsets that may hinder or challenge this goal, but there is still much work to be done. All students deserve to feel safe in the school and feel that their concerns are valid and being addressed. The school and district administration need to align behind core values that support equity, diversity, and inclusion and make it clear that racism, homophobia, and antisemitism will not be tolerated within the district. School leaders and teachers who have committed to the work of anti-racism need to know that their efforts will be supported by both the central office administration and the school committee. Additional opportunities are needed for faculty members to work together and develop a culture of support and collaboration and the stability of leadership is crucial to all of these efforts.

Recommended Next Steps

- Work collaboratively and creatively with the district to create more diverse hiring practices
- Work collaboratively and creatively with the district to hire more BIPOC staff
- Develop and implement a plan to retain teachers and school leaders committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Develop and implement district-wide core values that affirm a commitment to equity, inclusion, and support for diversity
- Create clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of department heads so that they can more effectively support teachers
- Offer opportunities for faculty and students to have an open dialogue and productive discourse about issues in the school, the Reading community, and the country
- Develop and implement a plan to promote teacher collaboration across departments
- Explore the idea of smaller student learning communities such as a house system or 9th grade academy
- Formalize student leadership and staff leadership groups around diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Provide necessary supports and staffing for English Language Learners
- Commit to anti-racist ideals that promote inclusion and acceptance of diverse ideas and viewpoints

Sources of Evidence

- priority area meetings
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Priority Area 3

Priority Area

Develop and implement curriculum guides that align with Foundational Element 2.2a: There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments.

Action, Impact, and Growth

Starting in the 2019-20 school year, teachers at RMHS started producing written curriculum documents in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school as part of a district initiative. The curriculum guides were completed in the winter of 2020 and were shared officially with the school committee and the community in December of 2020. The curriculum guides are posted on the district website under the Department of Learning and Teaching. High school curriculum guides are published in the same format across each department. Each guide includes a course description, content standards, skills, units of study with corresponding essential questions and key activities. The faculty are beginning to use these documents to inform common assessments and assignments. These guides will play a major role in facilitating the growth of Universal Design for Learning at Reading Memorial High School.

In 2018, the curriculum team began the process of creating curriculum guides. Many departments, including World Language, felt the need to align to new standards that were published in recent years and that the work of the curriculum guides would create a vehicle to get this much-needed work completed. The department heads wanted to create more uniformity within their departments and across the school, while at the same time establishing some autonomy within the delivery of the curriculum. The department heads spent a great deal of time during the past two years looking at the standards critically and developing essential questions in each content area. Department heads, and department members spent much of the past year formalizing and completing their work. The administration has been actively involved and supportive of their efforts. Departments outlined the courses and the standards for each course. Throughout the departments, there are areas of consistency, such as the sections in each of the guides and similar headings, while within the guides there are some differences, depending on the subject area.

The curriculum committee from RHMS described the process as an important one, and that this process brought them together, highlighting the best curriculum from each teacher. They were able to have conversations about aligning the curriculum to the standards, while at the same time retaining what they felt was already developed and the “best” of what they were doing. The department heads expressed, “It was very unifying to develop the same kinds of language and consistency over courses”. Department heads continued by stating that there was a real effort among the departments to use similar language when creating the guides, and they stated that they looked for opportunities to work together. The World Language department head stated, “For us, looking at our curriculum allowed us to become very clear about our expectations. It also allowed for us to make sure our courses were more equitable.”

The department heads expressed that they looked when possible to align K-12, but for the most part they focused on 9-12. They also stated that within some departments, World Language and Math, in particular, they were looking to align horizontally and vertically to connect with what the middle school was teaching and the larger K-12 district. Department heads also commented that in some ways they were looking to make the curriculum more rigorous. The World Language department head expressed excitement with the currency and relevance of the new state standards, “The standards allow us to look at the curriculum through the lens of proficiency and mastery. This lens will allow instruction to be more individualized and student-driven.” Both department heads and members of the curriculum committee stated that they wanted to focus on the standards, and also address the needs of the whole student. The English department head pointed out that as a faculty they were able to complete the curriculum guides and published them so that parents and students could easily view them.

When asked how the units of study, essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, were decided upon, the committee commented that they used a district template and that the department heads used these templates and created examples to help the teachers within their department to clearly see what they were trying to do. They used department time to do this work, which was once a month and over the two-year span. The committee stated that the assistant superintendent brought in professional development, (NESDEC training), which was in reference to overall curriculum guide work. They used exemplar models in the training to work on developing essential questions, and the curriculum guides. When asked if the training specifically helped them to understand how to create essential questions, they stated that it wasn't extensive and that the training was only at the beginning.

One of the questions posed during the time discussing the curriculum guides with the RMHS team was where do the units with lessons and activities within the curriculum guides actually "live". This question was utilized in an effort to dig down and find out what actually happens with the guides, as more than just a listing of activities. One of the department heads stated that the guides and the activities live at the teacher level. She commented that within the department there are shared folders and faculty collaborate and share widely. She did comment and others chimed in, that this process of sharing activities and work isn't formalized.

Within one department it was stated that there are no strict gatekeepers on common assessments or strict instructions on delivery of the curriculum, but that the curriculum guides were blueprints, and "how" teachers delivered the curriculum was really an autonomous decision among the teachers. A new teacher explained that having the curriculum guides has been very helpful this year, as it has provided a foundation and guide for what he should be teaching students. The team also expressed that because of the pandemic, collaboration in some ways was forced, and they related that this was a positive experience. The committee stated that the crisis forced them to have to share units and lessons and collaborate to become more efficient and consistent.

Along with a discussion on the curriculum guides, came along a natural progression to "how" the curriculum is ultimately delivered to students-and also how students experience the curriculum. When asked if instructional strategies were changed, or altered due to the work on curriculum, the group stated that in some content areas it has changed. For example, the math department commented that by looking at the curriculum, and instructional practices within the school they (the math department) realized that their instructional practices were very traditional when compared with how other departments delivered the curriculum. It was stated that because of this reflective approach they have utilized more project-based instruction, and become more flexible.

Another reflection discussed in regards to instruction was that some departments felt that there were too many prerequisites for classes and that this wasn't necessary. By reviewing the curriculum and examining how it was actually being delivered they realized that there was no need for many prerequisites and this also opened pathways into more classes and creating new courses. One example was from Graphic Design to Digital Animation.

Another area that developed from discussing the curriculum guides, instructional practices, led to information about all of the work that has been done on UDL. Teachers have been able to utilize a great deal of UDL training in collaboration with the SEEM collaborative. The English department head reported that there were a number of faculty (although they reported that there wasn't a critical mass of faculty who participated) who took the eight-week course on UDL and that there were three faculty members going beyond this, and participating in the training of the trainer for UDL. The faculty at RMHS is working on building internal capacity for this work at RMHS.

Another area of impact is the collapsing of courses, meaning instead of having several levels, they have fewer. This has made the UDL work even more imperative as teachers try to meet the needs of more diverse classes. It was also stated that this has enabled teachers to teach many different classes, and not have just a few teachers teaching classes at the college level or AP level, but a variety, which they stated as positive. The English department head reiterated the importance of the UDL work, "With the collapsing of levels, UDL is the most promising in addressing access, leveraging choice and for taking a broader view of curriculum."

Assessment practices seem to be an area that the school is working on. While there are some common unit assessments, this isn't the case in each content area. The department heads state that the lack of collaboration

time has been an obstacle for them to proceed with more work on common assessments, as their time has been developed to their first task, creating the curriculum guides. Within the area of assessments, the comment was made that before the pandemic they had more of a focus on data and that they had a data coach. They stated that their focus was on teaching during the crisis and that they didn't have the time recently to work on examining data.

The curriculum maps are extensive and provide a great deal of information. The guides are broken down into each course, provide a description, skills focused on, units are outlined, essential questions provided, and key activities clearly noted. When reviewing the curriculum guides, it becomes very clear as to what the main focus is of the course and what students will be asked to know and be able to do as the course progresses. The curriculum guide work as it stands now provides an important overview as just outlined. What would be important to keep in mind is that the unit plans within the guides need continued work and completion. Also, common assessments are an area to also continue to focus on, overall. This is an area especially in the subject areas of mathematics, ELA, and STEM that would benefit from common assessments being utilized.

Recommended Next Steps

- Develop and implement a process to ensure that the curriculum guides are kept up to date with the most current standards in each area
- Continue to analyze the curriculum guides, to make sure that the skills, concepts, essential questions, and activities are relevant and have been assessed and evaluated to be effective learning for all students
- Create horizontal and vertical alignment within the curriculum. While there is some alignment in some areas horizontally and vertically, mainly in mathematics, a suggestion would be to look at all content areas to make sure that there is a vertical alignment and horizontal one within the content area and across disciplines to avoid gaps in knowledge.
- Provide more dedicated, scheduled time for professional development on making the curriculum guides “live” at more of a consistent level. More collaborative time will allow the curriculum guides to be discussed, shared, within the department and school and create more of a living document that lives at more than just the teacher level.
- Participate in professional development (and share among faculty good examples of) on different types of instructional strategies that improve student engagement, which seemed to be a concern among the curriculum leadership and observed during the classroom visits which were conducted. (Examples might include strategies for framing the lesson (essential learning, student learning objectives, itineraries), providing specific and measurable criteria for success prior to assessments, for presenting information, supporting mental engagement, (make cognitive connections) checking for understanding, and for consolidating and anchoring learning.)
- Create structures within department time (perhaps additional department time is needed) to examine, create, implement, and analyze as a department common assessments. This is a needed addition, especially in the areas of English, Mathematics, and STEM. There currently aren't common assessments, students experience while outlined on the curriculum guides are to be similar, there is currently no way to assess if their experience is similar, i.e. if they learned the same things-if they learned what was outlined within the curriculum guides. This is a necessary next step.
- Continued support of resources such as Edgenuity and, Newsela, which were both resources offered and used to support students during the pandemic.
- Use summer months to offer paid PD and begin looking at, modifying, and revising curriculum by departments.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- priority area meetings

- priority area observations
- school leadership
- students
- teacher interview

Priority Area 4

Priority Area

Reading Memorial High School - Priority Area 4 - Inclusive Instructional Practices aligns with Standard 2.4 - Instructional Practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Develop and implement a cohesive referral process to identify and support students in need of interventions.

Action, Impact, and Growth

Beginning in 2018, Reading Memorial High School began consolidating academic levels from Honors, Strong College Prep (SCP), and College Prep (CP), to now Honors and College Preparatory in all subjects in addition to an increase in Advanced Placement courses. Movement forward in the areas of the adoption of common language practices and differentiation in unlevleed classrooms was slowed due to the pandemic and the curtailment of financial resources for professional development, particularly in the area of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

In the 2019-2020 school year, RMHS began to adopt Universal Design for Learning frameworks. Currently, there are three teachers who are trainers. Professional development opportunities at the 2021 Reading Institute included offerings in UDL. Several teachers trained in UDL are adopting UDL principles into their classrooms. One science teacher stated, "We meet the learners where they are. The developed checklists based on the levels of critical thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy offers the students choice in the level of participation of activities." Members of the faculty have used UDL in terms of offering choices to students. The hope moving forward is that all staff will be trained in UDL over the next three to five years. The principal stated that funds for UDL training have been curtailed affecting the implementation of training and practice for teachers. She does anticipate some form of training to continue in this area.

Organizational and support structures in place outside of the classroom supporting students with rigorous learning opportunities include the following:

In the 2018-2019 school year, Academic Lab was implemented. Academic Lab is a guided study hall period for students who are struggling in their classes but are not special education students. In Academic Lab, students work in small groups with a designated teacher to track, organize, prioritize, and complete work. The emphasis is on student organization. This work continued in the 2019-2020 school year but was dropped during the pandemic. In terms of measuring the success of some of the interventions and supports in place, it was expressed that the Academic Lab would probably be the easiest to collect data on to measure the impact of success. It hasn't been in place long enough to do a deep dive on data, but it was stated by teachers that this information could be obtained easily.

Also, in the 2019-2020 school year, the Mathematics Department reopened the Math Lab that was covered by almost every period of the day with a Mathematics teacher. The Math Lab was a drop-in extra-help service available to all students. Both the Math Lab and Academic Labs were suspended during the pandemic; hopes are for their reinstatement in the fall of 2021.

Another support structure in place is that of the 80-minute flex block. In multiple meetings, teachers stated that this was a great resource available during the pandemic where students could schedule extra help from their academic teachers. Flextime was equitable for those students who couldn't stay after school because they take the bus.

Additionally, in the second semester of the 2018-2019 school year, the principal and the Director of Guidance, created a new referral process for the Student Support Team (SST). These meetings take place on set days during the first or last block of the school day. Department Heads are unscheduled during those periods, allowing

for a flexible class coverage system, which enables teachers to attend SST meetings more readily. In the school overview, the principal expressed that the meetings were more pointed, time-efficient, and more accessible for teachers to attend.

Finally, for support measures outside of the classroom, RMHS began a partnership with BRYT (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition) in 2018-2019 to gather data in order to advocate for the creation of a Bridge transition program. The program, called Stepping Stone, came into fruition in March of 2019 and has been a very successful addition to the tiered interventions offered at RMHS to help students transition back to school from long-term absences. The program continues to consult with BRYT as part of a larger support network and RMHS wrote and received a \$65,000 grant from the state to support the program including furniture, technology, supplies, and professional development for staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid, Mindful Schools and the Leslie Institute for Trauma Sensitivity. Stepping Stone, according to the lead teacher, has seen a huge increase in numbers due to the pandemic. Having this program in place allowed for these students to come into the school during the pandemic to receive their support. This was critical to the social and emotional well-being of these students. The hope is continued support for this new program.

Inside of the classrooms, the co-teaching model seemed to be the immediate response when asked about strategically differentiating, individualizing, and personalizing education. Most departments all felt working with the same co-teacher over time allowed for them to build strong relationships. However, one teacher expressed the view that the co-teaching model could be distributed more equitably among the disciplines, stating, "The co-teaching model is focused and driven by the graduation requirements, the World Language department, for example, has been "hit or miss," there isn't a consistency in this regard". They continued to express that working in pairs was helpful in covering for one another, and for having conversations about diversifying assessments for students. While clear that it is a huge benefit to the teachers to work together, it was less clear as to how impactful this was to student learning. Collaborative planning time, more professional time dedicated to understanding the co-teaching model, and the opportunity for paid summer work, especially to address curricular revisions/modifications, all seem as positive moves towards embracing the co-teaching model.

When asked in what ways are group learning activities purposefully organized, teachers commented that they are trying to use creative opportunities. Online breakout rooms have met with varied success. One teacher explained she was able to get more positive results in the groups using breakout rooms if she gave a very specific example of a directed task and clear time frames. This worked especially well with 9th-grade students. This same teacher indicated that creativity was also key; structure and creativity with activities in the breakout rooms provided the most positive outcomes and a better learning experience for the students. Many group formats were described by the teachers; small groups, workshop models, "think, pair shares," and even a whole class working on one specific project collaboratively. All agreed that they intentionally group students at different points (depending upon the task) by diversifying the cognitive abilities, language abilities, and by considering the social dynamics the groups create.

Additional support and alternative instructional strategies within the classroom were less clear in that there are inconsistencies with the effectiveness of paraprofessionals. They commented that this is due to the fact that expectations are not clear and are also inconsistent; some will rise to the challenge, while others need a lot of direction and instruction. Some have really great working relationships; they described cooperative teaching where they share students and co-plan. The pervasive comment made in terms of co-teaching is the need for co-planning time.

Formative assessment in the classroom and technology are intricately tied, it seems, in response to the pandemic. In 2020-2021, an Edgenuity grant funded unlimited access to the digital platform. There was also a grant for unlimited access to Newsela. A grant was also received for full digital access and training for the social studies department in Brown University's acclaimed Choices program. Differentiation is built into the Choices units and activities. Other resources used for formative assessment purposes with built-in assessments are Edpuzzle, Jamboard (both of which received PD), PollEverywhere and Google Surveys, Delta Math, CommonLit, and more. However, when asked how they used the formative assessments from these tools, only one or two of the teachers gave answers as to how they use the assessments to inform and modify their curriculum. It was clear that student choice is being addressed using these different tools; however, it is less clear if these tools address differentiation and if the individual's needs are still being met or addressed? The use of technology was

clearly a positive move for the school for collaboration, reaching the students, and for student engagement. Teachers “dove in” to learning technology this year and this is a strength. It is critical that tools such as the Google Suite, and the above mentioned will be sustained financially in the upcoming academic years.

Recommended Next Steps

- Provide more dedicated time to the training of teachers and implementation of UDL to push forward with adopting common language practices and differentiation in the unlevelled classes
- Create robust structures for tiered intervention
- Reinstate both the Academic Lab and the Math Lab to meet the learning needs and offer support to students needing intervention and begin to collect data to measure the success of impact.
- Continue to provide flex block to students. This gives students access to their academic teachers for extra support and provides equity in access to those students who do not have the opportunity to stay after school.
- Use the improved SST process and have this support both an RTI process and a more robust data protocol, taking all three structures SST, RTI, and data processes to support and complement a safety net for students.
- Continue to support the important tiered intervention Stepping Stone Program and its collaborative partnership with BRYT. Support to students transitioning after long absences is on the rise, especially after the pandemic, this program is vital to these vulnerable students.
- Provide professional development for a deeper understanding of the co-teaching model.
- Clarify the role of the paraprofessional and expectations for more consistency. Provide more time for teachers and paras to meet and design more alternative instructional strategies for students needing intervention.
- Continue professional development and the financial support of technology; continue the use of the Google Suite and other tools used for collaboration, engagement, and choice.

Sources of Evidence

- central office personnel
- classroom observations
- department leaders
- priority area meetings
- priority area observations
- school leadership
- school support staff
- school summary report
- students
- teachers

Part 3 - Reflection on Student Learning

Reflection on Student Learning

Instructional practices are beginning to be designed to meet the learning needs of each student. Teachers at Reading Memorial High School are working on differentiating their instruction through Universal Design for Learning as appropriate to meet the diverse learning needs of each student. This has been a point of emphasis by the school over the last few years. Teachers in the core academic areas participate in professional development designed to identify differentiation strategies. Google Classroom has been an excellent tool that teachers consistently use. It allows students to have access to class information anytime and lessens confusion about what is due when. Individualization and personalization occur on zoom through break-out sessions. Teachers strategically create breakout groups based on student needs and meet individually with small groups or individually with a student. The personalized approach to learning is well received by the students. Professional development has been offered several times to the staff on differentiation and the use of technology in the classroom. Various formative assessments are used to improve instruction, and classroom observations show various methods of checking for understanding used by the teachers. Teachers are willing to adjust their practices when needed and to reteach the subject. In a science class after a student expressed that they were not sure how to solve a particular problem, the teacher provided an explanation and then asked the student to explain it back in their own words. Teachers have students learning at home as well as in the classroom and pay special attention to ensure that at-home students have opportunities to give input and share their ideas even though they not physically. Feedback to all students is observed being given in various forms and all students interviewed felt supported. In biology, the teacher uses a flipped-classroom approach that allows students to view lectures and video notes outside of school and then allows students to ask questions, discuss concepts and do labs during in-person instruction. In an acting class, film clips are given for helping to illustrate improvisations. The clips outline exactly the point the teacher was trying to get across, the elements of improvisation. The students can make clear connections between what the teacher was telling them about the components of improvisation and what the actors are doing in the skits.

Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their own learning in many classes. Students attest to the fact that they have the opportunity to design the way they are assessed on some occasions. In an English class, students are allowed to choose their own journal entries to share with a small group of their peers in a breakout room, receiving feedback and additional commentary. In a biology class students analyze data, participating in research, and dive into their own work on genetically modified mosquitoes. Eleventh-grade students participate in a "Real Life Problem Solving" project during the school's mid-year assessment period. Students choose areas of interest and then are placed in groups with a problem to address within that area of interest. Students then plan ways of researching the problem, solving the problem, and presenting the solution to the problem. In the English department, there are opportunities for students to write essays in response to class discussions or questions that they pose themselves rather than in response to teacher-generated prompts. Eleventh-grade English students create a podcast on a topic of interest as part of a journalism unit. Some classes endorse project-based learning and offer authentic learning assessments. In a financial literacy course, students are involved in an authentic project called "Renting an Apartment." The students are guided to choose their own careers in the future, research places to live, and calculate what they can afford based on the starting salary for the job they chose. In an English class, a student presents on Hamlet, sharing quotes, thoughts, and questions around Hamlet. Students lead the learning and pose thoughtful questions to peers. In a math class, students teach their peers how to solve a problem. If they get stuck they ask another peer to help. At the end of the lesson, the teacher then summarizes and makes sure learning was understood. Students report that they occasionally have opportunities to choose how to present what they know about a particular topic or unit such as a revolutionary war unit where a student chose to write a diary from the perspective of a colonial soldier. Another 12th-grade student is doing an independent study in math with a faculty advisor.

In some areas of the school, learners engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. In a math class students are looking at ways to find the derivative. The teacher asks students to think of more than

one way to solve the problems and think about different steps to doing that. In most classrooms students are encouraged to use the chat feature in zoom or to raise their hand in the classroom with questions. Inquiry learning is also woven into an English class in which students analyze five motifs in a movie then use that analysis to write an essay explaining the use of one of the motifs supported by examples of where the motif appears in the film. In a math class, higher-order thinking skills are used as students are given raw data to analyze regarding sunrise and sunset times. They graph this using x and y-axis points and discuss their findings with their peers. Projects frequently ask students to synthesize and create higher-order thinking while also connecting questioning, investigating, and expressing understanding. In sculpture class students utilize problem-solving skills as they were encouraged to create a prototype of an animal they were sculpturing. They came up with a paper model of the animal first before beginning to sculpt.

Learners demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment strategies that in some cases inform classroom instruction and curriculum. Teachers are observed using a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. In a history class, students use a jigsaw activity where each student reads a different piece of information about Post WWII and contributes it to a shared document related to the economic, social, and political landscape in the US after WWII. French class students demonstrate their knowledge of pronominal verbs by describing their morning routines to one another and matching the sequence of events with a line of pictures that illustrate their routines. This formative assessment helps students demonstrate their understanding of pronominal verbs. Teachers provide regular and consistent checks for understanding in ways that engage every learner's thinking about the concept, skill, or information being learned. In an English class where learners are all remote, the teacher checks for understanding by asking questions, and through formative assessment, in addition to questions, students all give a quick thumbs up/down to ensure understanding. Students use a variety of assessment strategies including in a film class note-taking sheet as they watch Psycho to capture ideas and elements ranging from its structure; notable tropes, sounds, and edits; and Hitchcock's motifs. Students in an English class share their findings in a dialectical journal with a small group of their peers in a breakout room. Students return to the classroom for full class discussion with teacher-generated questions ensuring their understanding. Across classrooms teachers working with students respond to their questions with a question to increase comprehension. In an English 10 class, students read Into The Wild and create a visual presentation that reflected their own journey like the author's, as a summative assessment.

Reading Memorial High School learners have opportunities to demonstrate learning, receive corrective feedback, and in some cases use this feedback in meaningful ways to support learning. Students are given consistent, systematic, specific, and timely corrective feedback. In a World Language class, the teacher engages in continuous dialogue with her students in Spanish, correcting their language skills in a timely and consistent way. Students are kept engaged and on task receiving feedback. Students are able to improve in the skill being taught. In a math class, students continuously have opportunities to practice skills of solving derivatives. The teacher checks with both students online and in-person to ensure students' understanding. Students are given the opportunity to confirm their understanding through continuous practice. Feedback is given to those students who understand so that they can continue their learning and reteaching is given with follow-up practice to ensure understanding. In another class, students have the opportunity to ask questions and seek alternative solution methods. The teacher in the same class demonstrates approaches to problems and solutions through SMART Notebook. Students at Reading Memorial High School are given teacher feedback as well as peer feedback and self-reflection to sometimes guide the next steps in learning. In a science class, learners demonstrate learning through a game called Kahoot. They can see their answers and how they answered comparatively with the class, and they also discuss why they chose the answers they did. Students receive feedback from their teacher using visual diagrams and past power points as well as their peers through the game and discussion. The teacher refers to past powerpoints to help clarify information and give feedback to the students to ensure understanding for an upcoming assessment. Students give peer feedback to guide the next steps in learning through a writing process called writers workshop. In another class, students review each other's graphic organizers for a paper on the Canterbury Tales and provide feedback about their thesis, main ideas, and quotes related to the thesis. Students report that there are some opportunities to re-do assignments or assessments that do not go well, but that it is teacher dependent so students have to ask their teacher individually.

Learners use technology across curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning. There has been a huge amount of technology integration over the past year as a result of the pandemic. The school now

considers this a strength of their teaching. Across the majority of settings, students use Google Suite and Google Docs to communicate their learning clearly. They use it to access, support, and document their learning and collaborate to support their learning. Students use Google Presentation to share what they have learned. Students are able to access and supplement their learning by using Google Classroom to enhance their learning with documents shared by faculty and peers. In addition to Google Suite, many faculty are using tools to both enhance and assess understanding and knowledge. In a history class, students use a polling app to demonstrate whether they agreed or disagreed with political expenditures, and then students use the results to continue their learning. In a science class, students use Kahoot to demonstrate their knowledge in preparation for an upcoming test. The assessment gives immediate feedback to students and the teacher. In a math class, a teacher uses a math-based computer game to assess if students understand the material. They play the game, and the teacher tells how much of the information they retain based on the game. In a history class, the students use a Jamboard to share what they have come up with from the warmup "3,2,1" activity. Three main ideas, two questions, and one word they took away from the last class. In a combined Health Issues and P.E. class, Jamboard is used to discuss what the students thought they might be learning about for the semester. Teachers use the ideas to discuss the upcoming curriculum. Students in 10th grade College Prep Geometry class use SMART Notebooks to "show their work" to their teacher as he demonstrates approaches to problems and solutions on his own device while sharing screen. Other technology tools teachers are using include Newsela, Ed Puzzle, Jamboard, Zoom Polls, Edgenuity, Smartboard Notebook, Exit Tickets, PearDeck.

Part 4 - Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization

Conceptual Understanding

The school's conceptual understanding is developing. While there has been improvement since the collaborative conference, Reading Memorial High School does not have a solidified shared definition of learning for all students as there has been a high turnover rate of administration over the past 10 years, with the trend continuing this year. This turnover makes it difficult to create and implement a shared definition of learning. The Portrait of the Graduate (PoG) design team, along with members of the faculty, successfully developed a Portrait of the Graduate, which should become the driving force for the high school and the district that will guide all educational decisions moving forward. Members of the PoG design team articulated how the PoG will impact students in the community and its importance. The next steps for implementation of the PoG include developing a shared definition for proficiency for the skills in the profile, develop an assessment system to measure student attainment of proficiency, and examine programs and structures within the school and district to ensure they support the practice and achievement of these goals.

A shared vision for learning is present more within departments, but not holistically school-wide. Departments have recently completed curriculum documents that include course alignment with standards and an outline of units of study with essential questions and instructional strategies. Recent efforts to improve and standardize instruction including Universal Design for Learning and differentiation of instruction practices are building capacity in instructional practice but it is not yet widespread. Department heads serve as instructional coaches and mentor the members of their departments. A shared definition of learning for the school would assist teachers, department heads, and administrators in moving in the same direction to ensure that all learners experience engaging instruction. If the widespread integration of technology used this year during the pandemic continues when the school returns to full in-person learning, students will benefit from these varied approaches.

Commitment

RMHS has just adopted the Portrait of the Graduate, which is also being adopted pre-K through 12 by the RPS. Constituency groups voted unanimously in favor of the Portrait and the next steps to unpack the language as well as create a grounding visual will begin this summer.

The school has demonstrated commitment to the process of Accreditation through its work over the last two and a half years. The four priority areas of Portrait of a Graduate, curriculum, instructional practices, and school culture have benefited from the allocation of time and resources and the school has made progress in each of these areas.

RMHS has made strides in improving school culture over the past three years. The staff developed and has used with fidelity, meeting, and discussion norms that have allowed the space for productive and collegial conversations to take place at staff and department meetings. The school improvement plans have had at their core, a growth mindset, which has become more prevalent throughout the building. Continuous growth and reflection still happen largely within departments at RMHS rather than fully school-wide, but that is beginning to change. Many departments have been working on ongoing curriculum development, reflection about and research and implementation of instructional strategies, development of common assessments, and looking at data.

One roadblock to the commitment of staff is the relational trust within the building that is still being built. There is trust among department members, but trust between departments and with the administration is a work in progress based on the turnover in leadership the school has experienced over the past 10 years. A commitment on the part of each member of the faculty and the administration to invest in building a positive, supportive school

culture is needed. There is no silver bullet to this issue. Just a day-by-day commitment for each person to make a positive contribution to the school and the faculty. In spite of the lack of relational trust between adults in the building, there is a clear commitment of teachers to the students they serve. Students said that their teachers were there for them with respect to their academics as well as their social-emotional needs.

Another commitment that is lacking is a district-wide commitment to ensure an inclusive environment for students. There have been strides made at the high school over the past three years to develop an inclusive environment where all students feel welcome and heard, but there is more work to be done. The school and district administration need to align behind core values that support equity, diversity, and inclusion and make it clear that racism, homophobia, and antisemitism will not be tolerated within the district. School leaders and teachers who have committed to the work of anti-racism need to know that their efforts will be supported by both the central office administration and the school committee.

Competency

There is a high level of competency among department leaders in the building. They possess the skillset and mindset to move the school forward in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Their role is primarily as an instructional coach for teachers in their departments and to support and lead the curriculum work in each department. Department leaders were instrumental in the development of the curriculum guides. Department heads engaged in “praise walks” during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year just prior to the closure due to Covid-19, where they went into classes in small teams to observe for a few minutes and wrote a positive note to the teacher.

A large question in the school's competency lies with the turnover in leadership at both the central office and district level. In the 2021-2022 school year, Reading Public Schools will be starting with a new superintendent, a new Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching, a new METCO director, and at Reading Memorial High School there will be a new principal. The competency for the school to move forward on its initiatives and to make a lasting change will be somewhat dependent on these individuals.

RMHS staff acknowledge that improving school culture is an area of priority. There have been important strides taken over the past few years and the school is headed in the right direction, however, with a new principal coming on board, there is worry amongst the staff that the improvements may be impacted. Additionally, the schools and community have had some turmoil regarding national events where there are opposing positions.

Capacity

RMHS and Reading Public Schools (RPS) do provide more than sufficient time to implement professional development. There are a few ongoing workshops in the building, monthly meeting times for departments, staff, and collaborative groups, as well as some full-day or multi-session programs, such as the Reading Institute, access to UDL training, working with Landmark Outreach, and social-emotional professional development provided by Mindful Schools and the Leslie Trauma-Informed classroom. This year, a group of students and staff are engaging in anti-racist leadership training with SRI. Much of the professional development provided over the past three years has been focused on equity, inclusion, and social-emotional learning. Faculty still feel that the professional development lacks consistency over the long term which impacts the ability for continuous growth. While faculty members do have the opportunity to request funds for tuition reimbursement and professional development programs, it appears that there is not sufficient funding for ongoing, quality professional development that could take place beyond one school-year cycle.

The school has used collaboration time to accomplish its priorities. There are two department meetings a month and these have been prioritized over the last two years for curriculum work in all departments at the high school. Department heads led this work with the support of the assistant superintendent and the principal. District instructional coaches K-5 met with department heads to discuss virtual alignment throughout the district.

There is currently no collaboration time for teachers built into the school day. Without this time, it is difficult to create a cohesive system of professional practice between and among departments. For example, without collaboration time for general and special educators, it is impossible to realize the full promise of co-teaching. Teachers who teach the same courses need time to develop unit plans, discuss instructional strategies, design assessments, and look at data. The staff as a whole continues to struggle with the consolidation in levels that is now across all subjects and grades and a 3-5 year commitment to training all staff in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) would go a long way to bridging this divide and promoting an inclusive environment that supports learning for all students. Additionally, using the newly adopted Portrait of the Graduate as a guide, units of study in all departments can be updated within the UDL framework.

The adoption of the Google platform and specifically Google Classroom has increased the capacity among teachers for technology integration. This adaptation is working seamlessly and needs to continue to provide students and teachers the ongoing access to this rich resource in all classes.

Additional Information

Additional Information

Since the time of the school's Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference report, the school reports multiple changes in ratings to the Principles of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation. Many of these changes are due to the ongoing work of the school focused on the Priority Areas for Growth identified at the time of the Collaborative Conference visit. Several of the changes note an emphasis on Principles that have been crucial during the pandemic shift to online and hybrid learning.

Standard 1 Principle 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.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

- RMHS has completed the work involved in developing a portrait of the graduate. This has been presented to the School Committee and has been the culmination of a year-long process that included representatives from the RMHS staff, administration, central office staff, students, parents, and community members.
- RMHS has also implemented Stepping Stone, a program to assist students returning to RMHS from hospitalizations, placements, and other programs.
- The RMHS Guidance Department has been proactive in reaching out to students during the pandemic; counselors have communicated with families and students consistently to help address social-emotional needs, supports, and coordinating wrap-around services for students in need. Additionally, counselors have also played a key role in identifying students who require technology such as computers and hotspots necessary for remote and hybrid instruction.
- Guidance counselors and special education liaisons consistently communicate with regular education staff to ascertain the progress of students identified as at risk in the current school year.

Standard 1 Principle 4 - The school community's professional culture demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through the use of research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

- RMHS staff engaged in ten days of professional development in advance of a return to school in a hybrid model. District and RMHS staff both received and presented professional development sessions targeted at building capacity in the use of numerous technology platforms designed to facilitate student learning and engagement.
- UDL, or Universal Design for Learning, has been introduced to RMHS in the 2020-2021 school year as part of a "train the trainer" model. The goal is to expand the number of trainers in the upcoming years and build capacity amongst staff by having departments incorporate UDL principles of instructional practice.
- In the 2018-2019 school year, RMHS partnered with Adam Hickey, from The Landmark School's Outreach Program to look at instructional practices at the Grade 9 level. Adam Hickey also was a part of both the fall

and spring professional development offerings in the 2020-2021 school year.

Standard 1 Principle 7 - The school culture fosters civic engagement and social and personal responsibility.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

- Student Council is active and continued to deliver a Veteran's Day program in 2020, as well as providing therapy dogs on-site during MCAS testing and Final Exams during the 2018-19 school year.
- RMHS has a "Best Buddies" program, under the leadership of Ms. Tagiatella and Ms. Cestrone, which matches regular education and special education students in a mentoring relationship.
- Rocket Ambassadors (students in grades 11 and 12) are trained by the assistant principals and help to transition incoming 9th graders to the high school. They created a number of informational videos for 9th graders this year that were shared on YouTube.
- A Courageous Conversations protocol was instituted by Principal Boynton in the 2018-2019 school year following a series of racist graffiti incidents at RMHS. These Courageous Conversations have been formalized into the culture of RMHS as "Equity Leadership training" through a school leadership initiative through Pegasus Springs, a nonprofit organization led by a former RPS administrator.
- In the 2019-2020 school year, RMHS partnered with the Reading Public Library for the "Pulse of Reading" RMHS hosted conversations that the school and the Town of Reading have been having about race and equity. RMHS hosted three separate student conversations in the 2018 -2019 school year, using the World Cafe model. A separate conversation was held by the principal for staff in the 2018-2019 and 2019-20 school year. Although interrupted by the school closure, the data from these conversations is available for use when we return to a full, in-person model.
- There have been numerous drives for causes and charities, both within the town and in the Greater Boston area. Clothing drives for the Chelsea Soldiers Home, a donation drive for Period Poverty, drives for local area food banks, and warming centers.
- Students and staff are being trained in Equity Leadership during the 2020-2021 school year by the School Reform Initiative with the intent of bringing their learning back to RMHS to implement programming around anti-bias/antiracist work and equity.

Standard 2 Principle 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.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Developing

Explanation from the School

RMHS has completed the work involved in developing a Portrait Of The Graduate. This process and its product have been presented to the School Committee and has been the culmination of a year-long process that included representatives from the RMHS staff, administration, central office staff, students, parents, and community members.

Standard 2 Principle 4 - Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Developing

Explanation from the School

- UDL, or Universal Design for Learning, has been introduced to RMHS in the 2020-2021 school year as part of a “train the trainer” model. The goal is to expand the number of trainers in the upcoming years and build capacity amongst staff by having departments incorporate UDL principles of instructional practice.
- In the 2018-2019 school year, RMHS partnered with Adam Hickey, from The Landmark School's Outreach Program to look at instructional practices at the Grade 9 level. Adam Hickey also was a part of both the fall and spring professional development offerings in the 2020-2021 school year.
- In the 2019-2020 school year, departments under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Chris Kelley completed curriculum guides for all courses within each department. Learning goals, essential questions for each unit of study, and a summary of materials and instructional practices used are all included in these learning guides.

Standard 2 Principle 8 - Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

Through the use of technology platforms such as edpuzzle, google classroom, pear deck, screen castify, and the portal to name a few, students have many opportunities to demonstrate their learning and teachers have a variety of means to deliver meaningful feedback to students. Teachers had the opportunity and choice not to give a traditional midterm exam this year, instead focusing on more formative assessments that could be more project-based which emphasized authentic learning. Many teachers report that their thinking about feedback has shifted greatly this year through the need to shift what teaching and learning looks like during a pandemic and with hybrid and remote learning.

Standard 2 Principle 9 - Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Transforming

Explanation from the School

- RMHS has implemented and/or expanded a number of platforms including G Suite, Peardeck, Jamboard, EdPuzzle among others to support students during the pandemic. The use of many of these platforms has been widespread across departments.
- The district has purchased SWIVL cameras and other technologies to further enable teachers to better broadcast in class instruction during the period of hybrid instruction.
- The district has focused many of this year's professional development offerings on building capacity among staff in utilizing online learning platforms and programs.
- Students have been provided with access to G Suite accounts and applications.
- Students and district staff have been provided with full access to Microsoft Office Suite, including Microsoft Teams, which has been used for faculty and district staff meetings.
- The District has purchased sufficient licenses for students and staff to utilize Zoom as a primary means of instruction and communication for students and staff during the pandemic.
- In the 2019-2020 school year, the district went remote for an extended period of time. The RMHS admin team immediately took inventory of the available devices (computers, tablets), and with the help of the tech department, reallocated these devices into the hands of students and families who needed a device.

- District-wide, the administration also completed an assessment of student and family technology needs, and reallocated technology to best support students and families.

Standard 4 Principle 1 - All students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Implementing

Explanation from the School

RMHS has a rich array of intervention services and supports for students in tier 1 through tier 3. We have Flex block which currently meets several times a week built-in as an academic support block. Students are able to meet teachers for extra help either in person by appointment or over Zoom. We have continued the Math lab as a virtual drop-in center and will re-open the Math lab for in-person support during the next school year. Students are provided a developmental guidance curriculum in grades 9-12 at certain points in the year to help with social-emotional needs and post-secondary planning. Academic Lab was created during the 2018-19 school year to be a more directed study for a small group of students who are recommended for this support. This will re-start when we are full in person during the next school year. RMHS has a CASEL meeting of administrators, counselors, nurses, and special education staff who meet in a case management model and we have a robust and efficient SST model. Finally, students who are returning from long-term absences have the support of the Stepping Stone program.

Standard 4 Principle 2 - All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Transforming

Explanation from the School

- RMHS has also implemented Ms. Malley's Stepping Stone program to assist students returning to RMHS from hospitalizations, placements, and other programs.
- Counselors are appropriately licensed in their respective areas. The ratio of counselors to students falls at or below the 300-1 ratio.
- The RMHS Guidance Department has been proactive in reaching out to students during the pandemic; counselors have communicated with families and students consistently to help address social-emotional needs, supports, and coordinating wrap-around services for students in need.
- Additionally, counselors have also played a key role in identifying students who require technology such as computers and hotspots necessary for remote and hybrid instruction.
- Guidance counselors and special education liaisons consistently communicate with regular education staff to ascertain the progress of students identified as at risk in the current school year.
- District-wide, the district administration and the district's food service provider have worked to meet the food insecurity needs of the community during this time. The school and our food service provider have provided "Grab and Go " meals to students and the community throughout the period of the pandemic.

Standard 4 Principle 4 - All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Initiating

Explanation from the School

- RMHS currently has one licensed Library Media Specialist who services the approximately 1230 students currently enrolled at RMHS. Subscriptions to some databases, including Gale Research Databases, are renewed annually. Additionally, the Librarian/Media Specialist has updated the collection over the past few years to incorporate a greater number of titles by more diverse authors.
- The vision is for the RMHS Library to transform into a library and media center with rich and varied resources for students and teachers to engage in hands-on learning grounded in design thinking, such a maker spaces.

Standard 4 Principle 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.

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

School's rating in the Summary Report: Developing

Explanation from the School*

English Learners receive support services and instruction at RMHS in both a regular education classroom setting and in small group instruction. This continues to be a need. As of January 2021, we currently have 1.5 FTE staff district-wide to service the needs of EL students throughout the district. RMHS anticipates a steady increase in the numbers of EL students enrolling in the district, in keeping with similar demographic trends in neighboring and like communities. RMHS currently has a need for additional trained and appropriately licensed staff to meet the anticipated needs of EL students.

Commendations

Commendation

- The perseverance of Reading Memorial High School (RMHS) throughout an unprecedented 2020-2021 school year to complete the collaborative and inclusive process of developing a pre-K through 12 Reading Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate
- The innovative and student-centered nature of the Portrait of a Graduate that portrays the RMHS student as a person and encourages them to carry forward their learning to life after high school
- The alignment between the Portrait of a Graduate and the core values of RHMS

Commendation

- The group norms and discussion guidelines implemented in faculty meetings that have made them more positive
- The feelings of many students that their teachers truly care about them as people inside and outside of the classroom and that they support them and want them to succeed
- The creation of We The Youth, a student-led group focused on solving social injustices in their community that has given BIPOC students a platform to express themselves
- The teachers who are involved in the school community outside of their classroom by volunteering to be advisors for student clubs and activities
- The courageous leadership of the principal who has worked hard to support Staff and Teachers Against Racism and her emphasis on bringing community problems to light
- The presence of supportive, open, and diverse conversations in classrooms led by teachers
- The creation of an environment in many classes where productive discourse is encouraged and teachers make sure every students' voice is heard
- The professional development focused on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, with RMHS hosting an Equity Institute attended by outside schools in March of 2019

Commendation

- The creation of curriculum guides that are published in the same format across each department including a course description, content standards, skills, units of study with corresponding essential questions, and key activities.
- The use of the new curriculum documents to inform common assessments and assignments
- The collaboration within departments and between departments in regards to shared language for curriculum documents, sharing of units and lessons, and providing newer teachers with a clear format of what students need to know and be able to do within each course at RMHS
- The opportunities for reflection provided by the curriculum work that is causing teachers to make changes to their instructional practices as a result of designing and implementing the curriculum
- The evidence of more project-based work in the classroom and less traditional ways of teaching and learning
- The use of Universal Design for Learning within each department and the professional development provided at various levels, and to some faculty members

Commendation

- The implementation of an Academic Lab to support student learning needs
- The creation of a Math Lab staffed by math teachers to specifically address the needs of students

- The access to core content teachers for academic help during flex block making extra help equitable
- The attainment of grant funds to create Stepping Stones
- The creation of a partnership with Bryt to help students transition back into school after long absences
- The implementation of a new referral process for SST
- The recognition of the interpersonal complexity of group dynamics and of the significance this environment has on the effect of student learning
- The teachers' willingness to embrace new learning during the pandemic and model the importance of being lifelong learners to their students

Additional Recommendations

Recommendation

Create a high school professional development committee that can set a clear direction and focus for professional development activities

Recommendation

Create a faculty/senate council comprised of teachers from different departments to promote collaboration and ownership in the school

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan for sustained common planning time for teachers to analyze student work, develop assessments, review curriculum, and share instructional practices

Recommendation

Consider developing smaller learning communities or a 9th-grade academy within the school to provide additional support to students

Recommendation

Ensure all teachers receive training in Universal Design for Learning through the cohort model with train the trainers

Recommendation

Ensure all learners engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills at all level

Recommendation

Provide adequate staffing to support EL students

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

Chair(s)

Chair: Ms. Alyson Geary - New England Association of Schools & Colleges

Assistant Chair: Mr. Scott Palladino - Wareham High School

Team Members

Kevin Blanchard - Barrington High School

Dr. Laura Chesson - Groton-Dunstable Regional School District

Dr. Tricia Clifford - Bedford Public Schools

Paige Crowley - Weston High School

Lisa Estabrook - Amesbury High School

Sarah Maloney - Portsmouth High School