

**New England Association of
Schools and Colleges**



**Commission on Public Schools
Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools**

REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School

Seekonk, Massachusetts

April 6 - 9, 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Distribution, Use, and Scope Statement	3
Introduction.....	4
School and Community Summary.....	7
School’s Mission and Expectations	12
Teaching and Learning Standards	
Mission and Expectations	14
Curriculum.....	18
Instruction.....	22
Assessment	27
Support Standards	
Leadership and Organization.....	33
School Resources for Learning.....	38
Community Resources for Learning.....	45
Conclusion	50
Appendix	
Visiting Committee Roster	53
Summary of Commendations and Recommendations.....	54
Substantive Change Policy	57

STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

The Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report

The Commission on Public Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School to be an important document submitted to the school principal, the superintendent of schools, and the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty days (60) of its completion to the superintendent, school board, public library or town office, and the appropriate news media.

The prime concern of the visiting committee has been to assess the quality of educational programs at the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School, the basis of the school's own self-study and in terms of the school's stated Mission and Expectations and the Association's seven Standards for Accreditation for public schools. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections are to be considered an evaluation of any individual faculty member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting committee.

Introduction

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of four Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE); the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS); the Commission on Public Schools which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS); and the Commission on American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA).

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPEMS requires visiting committees to assess the degree to which the evaluated schools meet the qualitative Standards for Accreditation of the Committee. Those Standards are:

- Teaching and Learning Standards
 - Mission and Expectations
 - Curriculum
 - Instruction
 - Assessment of Student Learning

- Support Standards
 - Leadership and Organization
 - School Resources for Learning
 - Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every 10 years and that the school shows continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School, a committee of nine members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included parents and community representatives.

The self-study of the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School extended over a period of thirteen school months from September 2012 to November 2013. The visiting

committee was pleased to note that a few parents and community joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School used the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee.

It is important that the reader understand that every subcommittee appointed by the steering committee was required to present its report to the entire professional staff for approval. No single report developed in the self-study became part of the official self-study documents until it had been approved by the entire professional staff.

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of nine evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools to evaluate the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School. The Committee members spent four days in the Seekonk School District, Seekonk, Massachusetts, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public school teachers and administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School.

The visiting committee built its professional judgment on evidence collected from the following sources:

- review of the school's self-study materials
- nine hours shadowing nine students from grades 3-5
- a total of 18 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 18 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

This report of the findings of the visiting committee will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools which will make a decision on the accreditation of the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School.

School and Community Profile

The town of Seekonk is a suburban community on the Rhode Island border. It was incorporated in 1812 from the western half of Rehoboth and contains rolling hills with extensive swamp acreage in the central portions of the town. During King Philip's war, settlers fled the Seekonk area and took refuge in several garrison houses located south and north of the town. It is conjectured that the buildings in the town suffered severe damage during the war, and it was probably after 1676 that settlers started moving back. Two industrial villages developed to supplement the agricultural economy, with such businesses as the Rumford Chemical Works. However, what had been the industrial area of the town in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was lost when East Providence was incorporated in 1862 taking half of the town's territory, two-thirds of its valuation, and more than two-thirds of its population.

The town remained basically agricultural into the 20th century, although the Kent Manufacturing Company did make tennis racquets and croquet sets on the upper reaches of the Ten Mile River. With the opening of the Providence and Taunton Street Railway in 1891, Seekonk became increasingly a residential suburb of Providence.

Seekonk is located in southeastern Massachusetts. It is bordered by Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on the northwest; East Providence, Rhode Island, on the southwest; Attleboro on the north; Rehoboth on the east; and Swansea on the south. Seekonk is 37 miles south of Boston, 40 miles southeast of Worcester, 4 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island, and 184 miles from New York. The total land area is 18.62 square miles. (source: MA DHCD)

The population in 2010 was 13,722 and the projected 10-year growth is 15,019 as determined by the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District. The educational attainment of the adults in the community is as follows: 88% have attained at least a high school diploma and 30% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The median family income in 2010 was \$76,283. The total civilian labor force in 2011 was 7,610 with occupations reported in the following categories:

Construction	5.9%
Manufacturing	2.6
Wholesale trade	3.8
Retail trade	37.1
Transportation and warehousing	5.5
Information	1.4
Finance and insurance	1.0
Real estate and rental	1.2
Professional and technical service	1.7
Administration and waste services	4.2
Educational services	5.5
Health care and social assistance	2.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2.7
Food and accommodations	18.3
Other	6.9

The unemployment rate in Seekonk was 9.6% as of August 2013 according to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

According to the 2010 census, Seekonk's race/ethnicity is:

<u>One race</u>	98.6 %
White	95.2
Black or African Am.	1.1
American Indian	>.1
Asian	1.2
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	>.1
Some other races	1.0
<u>Two or more races</u>	1.4%
<u>Hispanic or Latino</u>	1.8%

The town has open town meetings and is governed by 5 selectmen that meet weekly. There are five school committee members who are elected for two-year terms. They have one meeting and one work session per month during the school year and one meeting per month during the summer. The town's budget is approved annually at a town meeting. Municipal finance information for the last three fiscal years is below:

Financial Information for Aitken

	FY10	FY11	FY12
Per Pupil Expenditures	11,353	11,792	11,898
Per Pupil Expenditures (state average)	13,055	13,361	13,636
Percentage of local property tax allocated to school budget	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Percentage of school funds from various sources:			
Local Taxation	72.6%	74.7%	74.5%
State Aid	20.2%	17.8%	17.9%
Federal Grants	3.8%	4.2%	4.2%
State Grants	0.06%	0.05%	0.08%
Local Grants/Other Resources	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%

The budget for the 2013-14 school year is \$21,568,942, which accounts for 65% of the town's total budget. The total local tax amount used to fund the schools for this fiscal year is \$17,668,613. Historically the school's percentage of the town total budget is 65%.

The Seekonk Public Schools consist of four schools including Seekonk High School (grades 9-12), Seekonk Middle School (grades 6-8), George R. Martin School (grades K-5), and Mildred H. Aitken School (grades pre-K-5). High school students may also elect to attend the Tri-County Vocational and Technical High School in Franklin, Massachusetts or the Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton, Massachusetts. The district is a member of the South Coast Educational Collaborative, along with the Berkley, Dighton-Rehoboth, Fall River, Somerset and Swansea school districts. The overwhelming majority of Seekonk's high school students (93.1%) attend post-secondary education. The district's enrollment for the 2013-14 is 2,039. In Seekonk, there is one private elementary school, the Seekonk Christian Academy.

The Mildred H. Aitken School is located on Route 152 and is bordered by residential neighborhoods. The school is in close proximity to the fire station and the Seekonk Public Library. Its grounds include a basketball court, baseball field, playground and courtyard.

Aitken was built in 1959 and underwent extensive renovation and expansion in 1997-98. The school is fully handicapped accessible and all rooms, offices, and spaces are fully utilized. The building is locked at all times and there are six security cameras that monitor the outside areas. All staff and the police and fire departments can access the building using key fobs.

Currently there are three sections of each grade level for pre-K through grade 5. The Champions program rents space at Aitken from the school district and provides before and after school care to Aitken students who are enrolled in the program.

The average class size as calculated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the 2012-13 school year was 18.9 to 1. The 2013-14 average number of classroom students is: kindergarten – 15 students, grade 1— 24 students, grade 2 – 22 students, grade 3 – 26 students, grade 4 – 24 students and grade 5 – 29 students. The school also participates in the federal school lunch program; 85 students or 19% receive free lunch or reduced lunch.

Students attend the school from kindergarten through grade 5 and then transition to the middle school. The school's enrollment has been stable and there is no evidence of a projected enrollment increase. The student body profile for the last 3 years was:

Gender	Male	Female	Total
2012-13	235	226	461
2011-12	234	240	474
2010-11	219	241	460

Ethnic/Racial Composition

	Black	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Total
2012-13	11	8	16	6	420	461
2011-12	9	8	11	2	444	474
2010-11	9	9	8	2	432	460

Other populations

	Low income	Immigrant	Special education (3-5 years old)	Special education (6-21 years old)	English language learners
2012-13	65	1	9	45	5
2011-12	51	0	14	43	0
2010-11	60	0	3	36	0

Average Daily Attendance by percent

2012-13	96.77%
2011-12	96.68
2010-11	96.47

With the exception of incoming kindergarten students and the promotion of fifth grade students, there is not significant movement. The first grade has the greatest influx of students due to those enrolling in the public school system from private full-day kindergartens.

School withdrawals other than grade 5 moving to the middle school	
2012-13	20 students
2011-12	16 students
2010-11	19 students

Special education services are available to qualified students. There are currently 61 students receiving special education services and 16 students receiving Reading Recovery services.

Mildred H. Aitken School is classified as a Level 1 school and met its targets as set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The school is also using Galileo testing in grades 2-5 to assess student progress. District Determined Measures (DDM), as required by the Massachusetts DESE are being developed and/or piloted this year.

The school has curriculum guides in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. There is also a curriculum map for physical education.

Student achievement is recognized in a variety of ways within each classroom and also school-wide. Accelerated Reader (AR) awards are announced every Friday. Over the past two years, the majority of students have participated in this at-home reading program, which is coordinated by the Aitken Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). The school library media specialist also challenges students to read and report their success. She maintains a bulletin board that reports and celebrates the performance of each class. The STAR student recognition awards are earned by students during recess, lunch, art/music, library, health and physical education. Students earn tickets which are entered into a raffle with prizes donated by the PTO and Horace Mann Insurance. There is an end-of-the-year awards assembly that recognizes AR achievement. High achieving fifth grade students are nominated to participate in the Johns Hopkins Talent Search and may also receive the Presidential Academic Achievement Award if the posted criteria are met.

Leadership is encouraged and opportunities are provided to students in classrooms and throughout the school. The morning announcements are written and read by students. Students are given responsibilities in the classroom and in other areas of the school such as recess and technology helpers. Our fifth graders are continually recognized as the role models and leaders of the school. They are responsible for running the children's games at Pumpkin Somethin' and for all roles at the school's Flames of Fall.

The students in Aitken School are involved in many before-school and after-school activities. The PTO offers a Spanish class before school and is presently considering a yoga class as well. Several Girl Scout troops use the facilities after school and Boy Scouts meet at the Martin School. All organized youth sport programs at the schools are coordinated by the Seekonk Recreation Department.

Mildred H. Aitken School has an active PTO. The 2012-2013 PTO budget for student programs, enrichment, family events, and field trips was over \$22,000. In addition to funding programs such as these, the PTO has purchased the playground structure/equipment, document cameras, mimeo devices, and other teacher requests in the past several years. At the beginning of this school year, they also purchased all back-to-school supplies for students to take the burden from families. The Aitken parents' volunteerism, commitment, and partnership are evident in all aspects of the school program.

Mildred H. Aitken School is engaged in a number of business, education, and community partnerships. For several years there have been business associations with national companies such as Walmart and Sam's Club that offer grants and materials to the school for various functions. A connection with Staples provides fundraiser opportunities by allowing the cashing-in of printer cartridges. Likewise, BJ's donated a variety of school supplies and made a financial donation for the academic year 2013-2014 and supported the Flames of Fall fundraiser for the fifth grade. Horace Mann has donated bicycles and Kindles for incentive programs as well as provided two or three staff luncheons each year. Other partnerships such as the Stop & Shop receipt program, Generals Mills Box Tops for Education, and the Target Red Card also benefit the school.

Local businesses such as Micheletti's Restaurant, Rick's Music World, George Family Orthodontics, and Boneyard Restaurant have worked together with the school in making events more successful. For example, donations of food, gift certificates, supplies, music performances, t-shirts, and snacks have made incentive programs, enrichment programs, and fundraising events possible.

Community organizations such as the Seekonk Land Trust, Seekonk Arts Council, and PTO have also proven to be valuable partnerships. These organizations have provided grants, goods, and volunteer time to provide additional opportunities for students outside the classroom. In addition, the Seekonk Fire Department cooperates and collaborates with the school in presenting fire safety programs. The Polished Dental Program also visits the school twice a year to provide free dental care to the students.

Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School Mission and Expectations

Mission

The mission of Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School, in partnership with children, families, and the greater community, is to maintain a safe, nurturing environment in which responsibility, mutual respect and high academic standards are achieved.

Academic and Social Expectations

1. Respect yourself and others.
2. Do your best!
3. Get along with each other.
4. Help others.
5. Think first.
6. Use problem solving steps.
7. Be organized.
8. Be creative.
9. Finish your work on time.
10. Take care of our school and our earth.

Commission on Public Schools
Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools

Elementary School Teaching and Learning Standards

Mission and Expectations

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment

1 Mission and Expectations

The school has a mission statement, which describes what the school intends to achieve in its role as an educational institution and gives purpose and direction to all aspects of the educational process. The school has a set of academic and social expectations that generate high standards for student achievement and measure the success of the mission statement.

1. The school has a mission statement which flows from the educational community's beliefs about education, states the purpose of the school, and is reflective of the character of the school.
2. The school has a set of measurable academic and social expectations that are used to evaluate the success of the mission statement.
3. The school's staff and administration, with participation from parents, students, central office personnel, and other constituencies of the school, establish, accept and support the mission statement and expectations.
4. The mission statement and expectations are congruent with those of the district.
5. The mission statement and expectations guide the school's planning and decision-making about policies, procedures, and programs in support of the academic and social development of all students.
6. The staff and administration set a clearly defined cycle for the review and revision of the mission and expectations to adapt to the changing needs of students and present any revisions to the educational community.

Conclusions

The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School has a mission statement which consistently flows from the educational community's beliefs about education, states the purpose of the school, and is reflective of the character of the school. The mission was written to reflect the nurturing, welcoming character of the school. It is reviewed annually by the school council and feedback is regularly sought through staff meetings and Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings. The student academic and social expectations associated with the mission statement are reflected as goals. These goals are posted and publicized through a variety of mediums in the building, such as morning announcements and postings in all classrooms. The mission is also posted on the school website and is included in newsletters and notices sent home from the school. Academic achievement and effort is regularly shared and celebrated through bulletin boards and during morning school announcements. Staff regularly utilize the goals in lesson planning and in setting academic and social behaviors for their students. The school committee and PTO are knowledgeable and supportive of the school's mission. Local businesses and organizations support the school's mission through donations and gifts. As a result of its publication and distribution, staff are familiar with the school's mission and goals which guide the school in planning for student growth.

The school has a set of academic and social goals which are used to informally evaluate the success of the mission statement. A school-wide set of 10 academic and social goals written in child-friendly language was developed by the staff. Goals are written as a single list, and are not categorized as social or academic goals. Many of the expectations reflect social aspirations. Some of the expectations such as "think first," and "use problem solving steps," reflect academic goals. However, the academic goals do not reflect higher order thinking or other 21st century skills. These academic and social expectations, which are stated as student goals, are shared with parents and students through the school calendar and handbook that is distributed at the beginning of each school year. The report card committee included some of the school's expectations in the development of its standards-based report card. Students' progress on these goals is reported to parents in the trimester report cards and also on interim progress reports. Classroom teachers use a variety of informal systems such as clip charts and magnet systems to measure how students are progressing toward these goals. Even though the goals are posted and students and staff are familiar with them, there is no ongoing, consistent method by which to regularly measure students' progress in meeting the social and academic goals that are used to evaluate the success of the school's mission statement. When clear, rigorous indicators of the academic and social goals are developed, student progress in meeting these goals and meeting the success of the mission can be measured. (report card, handbook, self-study, student and teacher interviews, classroom observations)

The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School's staff and administration, with some participation from parents, students, central office personnel, and other constituencies of the school, establish, accept, and consistently support the mission statement and expectations. The school council, in collaboration with the faculty, developed the mission statement and goals more than 10 years ago. The mission is reviewed annually and the goals were rewritten in child friendly language in 2007. The report card committee members from both elementary schools incorporated student social responsibilities into the report cards.

Consistent with the school's mission, teachers work with the administration and PTO to create a nurturing climate which ensures the safety of all students. Programs such as Steps to Respect and Second Step have been implemented in classrooms to help

support the mission and goals of the school. The nurse teaches health classes that address issues of safety and caring for the community and earth. Problem-solving strategies are taught in classrooms by teachers and in lunch groups organized by the school adjustment counselor. As a result of these programs, activities, and organizations, the students, and school staff work together to establish and support the mission and expectations. (staff interviews, self-study, documents)

The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School's mission statement and expectations were deliberately created in congruence with those of the district. When writing the mission statement, the Aitken School Council began by reviewing the district's mission and vision which was created in 2007. The school district's mission states "to inspire all students to acquire the skills, habits, knowledge and passion to be responsible citizens of the global community" and the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School's mission states "to maintain a safe, nurturing environment in which responsibility, mutual respect, and high academic standards are achieved." As a result of aligning the school's mission with that of the district, the mission statement purposefully reflects the same commitments to students. (teacher interviews, documents, self-study)

The mission statement and expectations frequently guide the school's planning and decision-making about policies, procedures, and programs in support of the social and academic development of all students. The school council reviews the mission each year and uses it to develop annual school goals. A number of programs and procedures have been developed that support the mission statement, such as the Second Step Program, Accelerated Reader, and a school developed social expectations reward system where students are provided with tickets as rewards for positive behaviors. Teachers utilize these programs to ensure that all students have opportunities to achieve the mission and goals. Other initiatives are planned as a result of teachers focusing on the goals. Some examples are Jump Rope for Heart, food drives, and Project Undercover. Paper is recycled at the school and students are asked to bring other materials home to be recycled. Since this practice has been instituted, more students are using reusable containers in their lunch boxes illustrating their awareness about environmental concerns. The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School is a Feinstein School, selected by the Feinstein Foundation to receive financial support to encourage good citizenship and good deeds. Students take pride in their community outreach programs, such as recycling and food and money raising drives, many of which are student driven and are supported by Mr. Feinstein. As a result of regular use of the mission statement and goals to guide decision making and program planning at the Aitken School, many programs and activities have been implemented to support the academic and social development of all students. (staff interviews, student interviews, self-study, classroom observations)

The staff and administration has set a cycle for the review and revision of the mission and expectations to adapt to the changing needs of students and regularly present revisions to the educational community. The mission is reviewed by the school council each year. Any proposed changes to the mission are then presented to the staff at the September orientation meeting for review and suggestions. The school council reviews any suggestions and votes to accept the new mission. However, community review and solicitation of feedback on the mission and goals is limited. The mission is posted throughout the school, included in the student handbook, and posted on the website and in monthly newsletters. Consequently, the mission reflects the beliefs of the school and the educational community. (self-study, interviews, documents)

Commendations

1. The mission statement that is reflected in the nurturing, welcoming character of the school
2. The involvement of faculty, staff, parents, and school council in the development of the school's mission and expectations
3. The knowledge and support of the staff and educational community in implementing the mission and expectations for student learning
4. The use of the mission statement to guide decision making and implementation of programs and activities

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a method to assess the level of achievement of each of the school's academic and social expectations
2. Include opportunities for comprehensive community review of mission and goals
3. Establish clearly measurable academic and social goals that reflect rigor and relevance for 21st century learning

2 Curriculum

The curriculum is the framework of knowledge and skills that articulates the school's expectations for student learning. It aligns with district, state, and national standards. The curriculum links expectations for student learning to instructional and assessment practices. The strength and effectiveness of the curriculum are dependent upon the commitment of the school and district to a continuous process of implementation, review, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum.

1. The written curriculum is aligned with the school's stated expectations for students' academic and social and developmental needs.
2. Each curriculum learning area clearly articulates learning standards which support the school's stated expectations.
3. The curriculum is intellectually challenging, developmentally appropriate and allows for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
4. Effective curriculum coordination and articulation takes place within the school as well as with all receiving and sending district schools.
5. The curriculum incorporates classroom and school-wide technological and library/media resources.
6. There is a systematic and ongoing process for curriculum development, review, evaluation and revision.
7. The school provides professional development opportunities, time, fiscal resources and staffing to assist in the development, understanding and implementation of the written curriculum.

Conclusions

There is limited current written district curriculum aligned with the school's stated expectations for students' academic and social and developmental needs. Teachers have copies of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English language arts, math, and social studies standards in their classrooms that currently serve as their curriculum guides. Current district grade level curriculum aligned to the state's Common Core in English language arts and in mathematics has not been completed. For example, a few grade 3 teachers provided a mathematics curriculum map. In addition, few teachers utilize district curriculum such as grade level maps for core content areas. The 2006 district curriculum guides have not been updated to align with the Common Core State Standards and revised 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. When a guaranteed written curriculum is implemented in all grades, there will be consistency in aligning the curriculum with the school's expectations for students' academic, social, and developmental needs. (curriculum director interview, teacher interviews, grade 3 math curriculum map, self-study, curriculum documents, classroom observations)

Each learning content area has limited written curriculum that articulates learning standards which support the school's goals. Teachers utilize textbooks and other instructional resources as their foundation for teaching learning standards. Teachers rely on texts such as *Investigations* in mathematics, utilizing its Common Core State Standards' snap-ins, to serve as a curriculum guide. Texts and other resources in science and social studies textbooks are used to integrate the standards in these content areas. Other examples of resources used as curriculum guides include the newly adopted program, Tools of the Mind, which drives the kindergarten curriculum, and the Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing for grades 1-5. Scott Foresman Reading 2000 is used in grades 1-5. Other resources include The Great Body Shop for health and Second Step and Steps to Respect for the social curriculum.

To support the school's academic goals and the state curriculum, the school district has purchased Rubicon Atlas to electronically map curriculum to align to the Common Core State Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, but few teachers from the district have been trained well enough to utilize the software at this time. There were plans for members of the Curriculum Council to provide professional development training during the school year 2013-2014, so that grade level teams could map their curricula and create interdisciplinary units using the Understanding by Design (UbD) model to upload to Atlas Rubicon. However, this training was put on hold because professional development was focused on the new teacher evaluation system and completing the school's New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) self-study.

The Seekonk Public School district has published parent/guardian guides, which briefly articulate grade level expectations based on Massachusetts Frameworks for English language arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. The district's standards-based report cards also communicate state learning standards.

Grade 3 staff developed a pacing guide for some content areas in the 2012–2013 school year and grade 5 staff created daily lesson plans to parallel the text, *Investigations*. However, lessons do not include the standards addressed by the lessons. State curriculum documents have not been redacted into district or school curriculum documents for teaching and learning with articulated standards in each content area and at each grade level. When each curriculum learning area has clearly articulated learning standards, which support the school's stated expectations then consistent delivery of curriculum will

be enhanced and supported. (teacher interviews, curriculum director interview, self-study, document review)

Curriculum is inconsistently intellectually challenging, developmentally appropriate, and allows for authentic application of knowledge and skills in a limited way. Tools of the Mind, which focuses on stretching students' writing, reading, mathematics and self-regulations skills, is used as curriculum in kindergarten. Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing is a school-wide writing program that has been recently introduced to staff in grades 1-5. Professional development to implement the new writing program has been minimal. However, the writing program has been fully embedded in all grades.

Field trips and presenters funded by the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) provide opportunities for some authentic application of knowledge and skills. Pre-K through grade 2 teachers utilize in-house presentations, while teachers in the upper elementary grades incorporate field trips to enrich their curriculum. For example, fourth grade teachers take their students to Slater Mill as a culminating experience in a unit on immigration. Teachers strive to provide challenging, developmentally appropriate and authentic learning experiences for students through their use of books and materials. When a formal written district curriculum in the core content areas exists, teachers' abilities to make learning rigorous, developmentally appropriate, and consistent for all students are strengthened. (teacher interviews, self-study, curriculum maps)

On occasion, effective curriculum coordination and articulation take place within the school as well as with all receiving and sending schools within the district. The district's curriculum director oversees K-12 curriculum articulation. Because the Curriculum Council is voluntary, equal representation across grades and schools is not guaranteed as the current make-up does not include a classroom teacher representative from each grade from both elementary schools in the district. The Curriculum Council meets four times a year for a full day to discuss curricular issues, such as textbook selection. Occasionally, teachers from the other elementary school in the district meet with teachers from Aitken to work on curriculum. A few specialist teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to find ways to integrate core content into their curricula. For example, the physical education teacher utilizes a third grade lesson on fractions in his class. The art teacher finds creative ways to enhance classroom mathematics curriculum as well. As a result, there are some informal systems in place for curriculum collaboration in the school. When more formal opportunities for district curriculum coordination and articulation to renew curriculum occur on an ongoing basis, curriculum will be vertically articulated among the grades in the school and the receiving school. (teacher interviews, curriculum director interview, self-study)

All grade levels incorporate classroom and school-wide technological and library media resources. Students regularly utilize laptops and iPads for research and enrichment. Technology is also utilized for the assessment component of the Accelerated Reader reading program and for Galileo, an assessment software test bank. Teachers also use a variety of technology resources such as document cameras and Smart Boards as part of their classroom instruction to diversify learning. One trimester each year students have instruction in the computer lab with the library media specialist, who often provides instruction designed to strengthen the classroom curriculum. As a result of teachers' use of technology in classrooms, students benefit by instruction that enhances teaching and learning to support the curriculum. (self-study, teacher interviews, library media specialist interview, classroom and library media center observations)

While there is a curriculum renewal plan (2009 -2014) to review, evaluate, and revise district-wide curriculum, teachers do not engage in regular and ongoing curriculum renewal. The curriculum director updated the English language arts and mathematics curriculum. However, there is no consistent use of district curriculum guides implemented at each grade level. Consequently, when an ongoing and systematic renewal cycle where district curriculum is developed, implemented, reviewed, evaluated, and revised across all grade levels, an aligned and guaranteed curriculum will be assured. (teacher interviews, document review, classroom observations)

The school provides limited professional development opportunities, time, fiscal resources, and staffing to assist in the development, understanding, and implementation of the written curriculum. Teachers have some opportunities engage in professional development opportunities centered on curriculum development in order to provide meaningful and challenging lessons for their students. Recent professional development time has been used to complete NEASC self-study process and focus on the new teacher evaluation tool. Some teachers had a half-day of training in Rubicon Atlas, the district's curriculum mapping software. However, teachers expressed that the initial half-day training fell far short of what is needed to understand and utilize the software. In addition, teachers have had little training in unpacking standards to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge and skills in the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics standards. When there are sufficient professional development opportunities focused on curriculum, there will be opportunities for staff to review, discuss, understand and implement the state Frameworks and the Common Core State Standards. (teacher interviews, self-study, curriculum director interview)

Commendations

1. The willingness and eagerness of the staff to engage in professional development opportunities in curriculum development
2. The partnering of itinerant teachers and classroom teachers to enrich the curriculum
3. The support for the enhancement of authentic application of the curriculum provided by the parent-teacher organization

Recommendations

1. Write and implement curricula with clearly articulated learning standards for all content areas and all grades
2. Ensure vertical curriculum articulation takes place in all curricular areas in order to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum
3. Develop and implement a systematic and ongoing process for curriculum development, review, evaluation, and revision
4. Provide all staff with adequate professional development in the district's curriculum mapping software and curriculum development

3 Instruction

Instruction is the means by which the curriculum is implemented and the stated expectations for student learning are realized. Instruction accommodates individual needs and learning differences and engages students in a variety of ways. Effective instruction is dependent upon self-reflection, professional collaboration and the implementation of exemplary practices.

1. Classroom instruction embodies the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, reflects current research on effective teaching strategies, and is designed to enable all students to meet the school's expectations for academic achievement.
2. Instruction addresses the individual needs of students, enables all students to have successful experiences, and promotes independent life-long learning.
3. Appropriate instructional materials and services are available for all programs including those for students identified with special needs and students whose abilities present unique needs.
4. Teaching facilitates learning by including practices that are exploratory, individualized, self-directed, authentically-based, and integrated across the disciplines.
5. Instruction promotes the development and application of higher order thinking skills and problem solving techniques.
6. Instruction fosters appropriate behavioral standards, responsible citizenship, and an appreciation of diversity.
7. Technology supports instruction and assists student learning.
8. The school provides professional development opportunities to improve instructional practices, resulting in increased student achievement.
9. Supervision of instructional practices is focused on the improvement of student learning.
10. The discussion of instructional practice is a significant part of the professional culture of the school.
11. The school allocates sufficient instructional time, fiscal resources, and staffing to support effective student learning.

Conclusions

To a limited degree, classroom instruction embodies the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, reflects current research on effective teaching strategies, and is designed to enable all students to meet the school's expectation for academic achievement. Teachers believe that they set high expectations for their students and that they use sound instructional practices including making students responsible for their own learning, setting criteria ahead of time, modeling, checklists, and reflection sheets. Some teachers use differentiation to meet the variety in students' needs and learning styles. Use of higher order thinking skills, instruction aligned to the standards, and data driven instruction is used in scattered areas. There is limited use of authentic tasks that require students to demonstrate an application of the knowledge and skills being taught. Also, because of the schedule for delivery of support services to at-risk students, they often miss core classroom instruction when they are pulled out. While instruction is aimed at meeting the school's expectation for academic achievement, teachers do not utilize a current district aligned curriculum or research-based best practices. When there is consistent use of varied and research-based instructional practices and teaching strategies by all teachers, instruction will meet the needs of all learners and enable them to meet the school's goals for academic achievement. (classroom observations, teacher interviews, documents, school leadership interviews)

Some areas of instruction address the individual needs of students, enable some students to have successful experiences, and promote independent life-long learning. Within some classrooms across grade levels, students are given different texts at their instructional level and for some students, tasks or products are adjusted based on individual need and capabilities. Proximity in seating students near to the teacher is taken into consideration for students who need extra support or refocusing. Re-teaching is provided for students who need clarification. Some teachers provide manipulatives to students who need them. Special education staff and teachers meet with individual or small groups of students who need extra help. Some students are being challenged within the classroom with rigorous instruction, materials, or higher order questioning techniques. In a few classrooms, instruction is broken out into small group instruction in order to provide in-class support to address students' strengths and weaknesses. When instruction addresses the needs of each student, all students will have opportunities for successful experiences and promoting students to be independent life-long learners will be supported and enhanced. (self-study, teacher interviews, parent interviews, support staff interviews)

Appropriate instructional materials are sufficient for all programs including those for students identified with special needs and students whose abilities present unique needs. Instructional materials include manipulatives, technology such as iPads, Mimios, laptops, document cameras, texts such as *Investigations*, Scott Foresman *New Beginnings*, and Lucy Calkins Units of Study for writing. All of these instructional materials are used for whole class instruction but do not meet the needs of all students, in particular, students who are high performing and need more challenge. The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has purchased Kindles and literacy materials to support instruction. Remedial programs exist in some grade levels. Reading Recovery is used for reading intervention at the first grade level, but overall, grades 2-5 have limited reading support for students at risk who are not on Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of high performing students is limited. Challenging assignments to engage students in higher order thinking skills is sporadic across grade and inconsistent within grade levels. A substantially separate program ABLES Jr., was created this year for two students to meet their learning needs within the school. Identified students receive therapy services and English language learner (ELL)

services. Consequently, while some materials and resources meet the needs of students with special needs, there is a lack of materials to consistently challenge and meet the needs of high performing students with unique abilities. (parent interviews, classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, teacher interviews, school leadership interviews, support staff interviews)

Teaching facilitates learning by including some practices that are exploratory, individualized, self-directed, authentically-based and integrated across the disciplines on occasion. Some teachers utilize authentic task performance and engage students in authentic hands-on learning tasks. However, all staff do not routinely implement individualized and self-directed learning practices. In many classrooms, teachers direct learning and engage students in learning activities using worksheets. Students who need extra support work with instructional aides while other identified students receive support from a specialist teacher, the differentiated instructor. A few teachers create learning tasks across the curriculum such as problem solving and scientific inquiry by creating authentic hands-on performance tasks. When instructional practices are exploratory, individualized, self-directed, authentically-based, and integrated across the disciplines, instruction will facilitate teaching and learning to further meet the needs of all students. (teacher interviews, classroom observations, student interviews, student shadowing, student work, parent interviews)

Instruction infrequently promotes the development and application of higher order thinking skills and problem solving techniques. Students engage in lower level tasks rather than analysis, synthesis, or application of knowledge. Typical instructional practice includes teachers utilizing worksheets and close ended text-driven questions. There are limited opportunities for student application of their knowledge and skills through engaging in inquiry, analysis, comparison, contrast and evaluation. Teachers utilized “Who? What? Where? When?” questioning techniques, generated from worksheets or teacher guides to textbooks. A majority of problem solving-tasks consist of word problems found on worksheets. Problem-solving techniques are taught for social situations through Second Step and Steps to Respect programs. Posters with these techniques are visible throughout the school and in some classrooms. When instruction includes the development and application of higher order thinking skills and problem solving techniques, students will acquire the skills necessary to achieve high academic standards and expectations and be lifelong learners. (teacher interviews, classroom observations, student work)

Instruction regularly fosters appropriate behavioral standards, responsible citizenship, and an appreciation of diversity. Visual reminders are posted in classrooms and throughout the school. Morning announcements encourage students to follow the goals of the mission statement. A few classrooms have behavior plans for identified students. Recognition is given to students who make responsible behavioral choices. Teachers hold students accountable for appropriate social behaviors. The school fosters multiple opportunities for students to give back to the community. Students demonstrate citizenship by donating to the community through collections food drives, volunteering for the Feinstein scholars program, and evenings of giving which involve donations of time and money. As a result, students are respectful of one another’s diversity and help others when needed preparing them to be responsible and positive members of the community. (parent interviews, student interviews, visuals throughout the school)

Technology supports instruction and assists student learning through deliberate use by teachers. Teachers successfully use a variety of technology in all areas of instruction, including, iPads, laptops, Kindles, Mimios, document cameras, Smart Boards, and projectors. Teachers who have interactive whiteboards utilize them to

enhance lessons. Students display their learning through technology including iMovies, Skype, and PowerPoints. As a result of the consistent and varied use of technology, student learning is enhanced and enriched. (teacher interviews, parent interviews, self-study)

The school provides limited professional development opportunities to improve instructional practices resulting in increased student achievement. There is no district or school professional development calendar. The teachers' contract provides for three district-wide professional development days. However, teachers are required to participate in only one of the three required days and have the option to participate in the other two days. School-based professional development is twice a month for one hour. The principal directs the topics for professional development at these bi-monthly meetings and is supportive of professional development opportunities. During the 2013-14 school year, the focus for professional development was on implementing the new educator evaluation system and on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) self-study.

There is limited professional development from the district, especially for implementing new programs such as Lucy Calkins Units of Study for writing, Galileo software for assessing students' performance in reading and mathematics, and Rubicon Atlas curriculum mapping software to ensure teachers are effectively utilizing these programs. However, staff has received some initial training on district initiatives. In addition, professional development beyond introductory training is limited despite implementation of these initiatives. When teachers are provided with sustained, ongoing, research-based professional development opportunities geared to meet the needs of all students, increases in student achievement will occur. (teacher interviews, central office leadership interviews, self-study)

Supervision of instructional practices is continually focused on the improvement of student learning. The district recently implemented the new system of educator evaluation during the 2013-14 school year. Teachers have received professional development to understand the new educator evaluation system. The district provided at least four hours of training in the new evaluation system and the principal also provided training, positive feedback, and ideas to improve instruction. The principal frequently visits classrooms and engages students in conversation about their work. As a result, teachers feel supported in their craft and are given feedback that allows them to continually improve student learning. (teacher interviews, self-study, school leadership interviews, school support staff interviews)

The discussion of instructional practice is, at times, a part of the professional culture of the school. The schedule provides common planning for teachers during the day, but there are limited occasions to ensure discussion of research-based instructional practices. One staff meeting is a grade level meeting which is led by teachers and notes of the meetings are required to be turned in to the principal for review. Often times, there is an agenda of tasks to complete during this meeting. Currently, there are no planned opportunities for teachers to meet across grade levels or in vertical teams. However, teachers are eager to collaborate with colleagues about using best practices. Although teachers meet as a staff in twice a month meetings and have some opportunities during these meetings to collaborate on timely and relevant topics, professional learning communities are not implemented on a consistent basis. When there are opportunities for rich professional discourse, a stronger professional culture will be created. (school leadership interviews, curriculum coordinator interview, teacher interviews)

In most content areas, the school allocates sufficient instructional time, fiscal resources, and staffing to support effective student learning. The school allocates sufficient instructional time per subject and per grade. Teachers are required to design daily lessons to meet the determined instructional minutes developed by the teachers. However, students with special and unique needs are often pulled out of core instructional time. Materials are adequate to meet the needs of most students. However, resources to extend and enhance learning and to support students at-risk are limited. The district, in partnership with the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and other community and business organizations, provides supplemental funds for instructional resources.

The elimination of support positions has had some impact on ensuring all students achieve at high levels and, in particular that all identified at-risk students in English language arts and mathematics receive services. Over the past five years the following positions were eliminated: a special education teacher, one differentiated instruction teacher, and a .25 Reading Recovery teacher. The case load of the special education teachers is anywhere from 11-17 students depending on grade level. There is one English language learner teacher for the building whose time is shared with two other schools and is only available to Aitken students in the afternoon. Therefore, the shared ELL teacher is not always available to service students during the least invasive instructional time. Due to time constraints and numbers of students needing assistance, the differentiated instruction teacher is only able to service small grade level groups of at-risk students in mathematics and reading. The elimination of the part-time reading teacher has meant that fewer at-risk students who need additional services now receive services. However, across all grades, there was limited consistent use of a tiered reading intervention model designed to provide in-class reading support to all at-risk students, specifically in Reading Recovery. There is limited evidence that staff have received training or resources to implement an intervention model. When adequate staff is allocated, effective student learning will be supported more fully. (self-study, teacher interviews, parent interviews, support staff interviews, school leadership interviews)

Commendations

1. The school-wide focus on incorporating social skills into instruction and fostering good behavior
2. The availability and successful use of technology across the curriculum
3. The willingness of the staff to work individually and collectively to improve instruction

Recommendations

1. Provide training in and incorporate the use of higher order thinking skills as routine instructional practice
2. Provide consistent opportunities for staff in grade level and cross grade teams to collaborate on best practices to improve student learning
3. Employ research-based instructional practices aimed at meeting the needs of a range of learners in and across all grade levels
4. Provide ongoing professional development training to maximize the effectiveness of implementation of new district initiatives
5. Ensure staffing is appropriate to meet the needs of all learners

4 Assessment

Assessment measures the progress of students toward achieving the school's stated expectations and standards. The analysis of assessment data guides the school in the review, evaluation, and revision of curriculum, and the modification and improvement of instructional practices. The school shares the results with its educational community.

1. The school utilizes an assessment system that embodies the mission statement and expectations for academic and social achievement and measures its progress in meeting those expectations.
2. An appropriate variety of classroom assessment strategies, reflective of current assessment research, is integrated with instructional practices.
3. The faculty and administration discusses and utilizes student assessment results in the review, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum, and the improvement of instructional strategies.
4. The identified learning standards for each curricular learning area are the basis for assessing each student's progress.
5. Students are active learners who reflect upon and assess their own learning.
6. The school uses a variety of reporting procedures to communicate the methods of student assessment and the results of individual student progress to parents.
7. The school provides professional development opportunities that foster effective assessment practice and strategies.
8. The school commits sufficient time, fiscal and material resources, technology, and staffing to support effective assessment procedures.
9. The school systematically interprets and reports its level of achievement of academic and social expectations for academic achievement to the parents and community.

Conclusions

The school utilizes an informal school-wide assessment system that embodies the mission statement and expectations for academic and social achievement and measures its progress in meeting those expectations. Methods, materials, and tools for assessing student progress such as Galileo, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), running records, and common assessments are used, but there is no cohesive school assessment system or plan. A school-wide plan for full implementation across all grades for when, how, and why these assessments will be used is not in place. The school has recently adopted the use of Galileo, a computer-based assessment tool to diagnose and benchmark student progress on Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts (ELA). Initiatives such as STAR Students, a school-developed recognition program, have been implemented to address social achievement but there is no methodical process to measure this initiative. When a formal system for assessment is implemented, progress in meeting the expectations for academic and social achievement embodied in the mission statement can be measured. (teacher interviews, documents, self-study, administration interviews)

An appropriate variety of classroom assessment strategies, reflective of current assessment research, is integrated with instructional practices. Teachers rely heavily on observation as an assessment strategy throughout all grade levels. Several teachers utilize pre- and post-assessment checks to help students monitor their progress and to check for understanding. Running records and checklists are used frequently in the primary grades. Rubrics have been designed for many units of study and are fully implemented in the Lucy Calkins Units of Study in writing. District-wide and state assessments include MCAS, Galileo, ACCESS, and DRA. There is no formal progress monitoring of student achievement at this time although discussion revolves around using Galileo in the future for monitoring progress, provided there is sufficient professional development to assist teachers in learning the process. When research-based assessment strategies are integrated systematically with instructional practices, the resulting data will help drive the instruction and measure each student's mastery of grade level standards. (data team interviews, teacher interviews, administration interviews, documents, student work, classroom observations)

The faculty and administration discuss and utilize student assessment results in the review and revision of the curriculum and improvement of instructional strategies in a limited way. The school data team reviews results of the MCAS each fall and results from Galileo in ELA, math in grades 2-5, and science in grade 5 three times per year. This voluntary team is comprised of the principal, the differentiated instruction teacher, a special education support person, the school adjustment counselor, the school psychologist, and a district representative. There are no classroom teachers on the data team. The team identifies areas of concern from the MCAS results and reports out at staff meetings and to grade level teams. However, the data team does not meet on an ongoing basis to review grade level or district assessments for the purpose of informing instructional practices. The weaknesses shown on the MCAS prompted reallocating personnel. For example, the differentiated instruction teacher now provides mathematics and reading interventions to students in grades 3-5. The data team has met less frequently during the 2013-14 school year because they addressed the weaknesses on the MCAS last year. On occasion, at the monthly grade-level team meetings, teachers look at student data and growth. Weaknesses at one grade level are looked at vertically across multiple grades. For example, math test results showed the words *perimeter* and *area* were a weakness. Teachers now use these vocabulary words in their explicit instruction. When the analysis of data is actively discussed by all staff for the review and revision of

curriculum and to drive instruction, instructional strategies will be further improved. (data team interviews, teacher interviews, administration interviews, self-study)

The identified learning standards for each curricular learning area are the basis for assessing each student's progress. All students are assessed based on objectives and/or standards found in the resources and textbooks used for each curricular area. However, curriculum standards have not been articulated for all grade levels. For example, in mathematics, teachers have created pacing guides outlining where Common Core State Standards (CCSS) align with their mathematics series, *Investigations*. Common assessments at some grade levels are utilized after units of study for the content areas of social studies, science, and math to measure student progress. Common assessments in literacy are not widely used at this time. Some teachers create their own assessments based on the CCSS. Results from these assessments provide the data that is the basis for reporting on the standards-based report cards. As a result, there is inconsistency in the thorough implementation of a standards-based curriculum for the core content areas and the ability to assess student progress on the standards in each learning area is mitigated. When identified learning standards for each content area are articulated, student progress can be more effectively measured. (classroom observations, teacher interviews, administration interviews, documents, self-study)

Students are active learners who regularly reflect and assess their own learning. Students have opportunities to participate in the Accelerated Reader program where they chart their progress. Student progress is charted on a hall bulletin board as well as through announcements on the intercom. STAR Students, a new positive behavioral support initiative, helps students to take responsibility for their behavior. Students earn tickets for good behavior in itinerant classes. Their tickets earned for demonstrations of self-regulation are turned in for a whole school raffle twice a year. In addition, students self-reflect on their performance in some classes through the use of rubrics, which are developed and utilized throughout many grades in subjects such as social studies, writing, and science. As a result of these practices, students are self-assessing and taking more responsibility for their learning, making them active partners with their teachers to improve their progress and support their learning experience. (bulletin boards, student interviews, teacher interviews, classroom observations, documents)

The school uses a variety of reporting procedures to communicate the methods of student assessment and the results of individual student progress and growth to parents. Standards-based report cards are provided to parents on a trimester basis. Standards are measured using a three-point scale in grades K-1 and a four-point scale in grades 2-5. Teachers aligned the report-card standards with the Common Core State Standards and differentiated between the different scales for each report card. Identified special education students are provided with progress reports along with report cards that outline progress made on their individual goals. Interim progress reports are sent home periodically to keep parents informed identifying student needs and suggesting ways parents can help. Parent-teacher conferences are held at the beginning of each year to discuss student needs and progress. Results from MCAS are distributed to the press, posted on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website, and sent home to all parents by mail each fall. As a result, these multiple forms of reporting student achievement strengthen the school-to-home connection and make parents active partners in the student's learning. (parent interviews, teacher interviews, report card review)

The school provides limited professional development opportunities that foster effective assessment practices and strategies to support teachers. Initial professional development was given the day before school began on Galileo, its purpose, and intended

use as an authentic measure of student progress. The Galileo assessment is given three times a year and is used as a diagnostic tool each year in the fall to group students for math and reading. Introductory professional development was provided for Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing. As a result, the writing program has not been implemented with fidelity and hinders the ability to utilize this writing program for school-wide benchmark assessments. Teachers are frustrated with the difficulty of implementation due to the lack of ongoing professional development. When sufficient professional development is provided for new tools, the extra support to implement these tools/programs will strengthen the effectiveness of assessment strategies and practices. (teacher interviews, administrator interviews, self-study)

The school commits sufficient time, technology, fiscal and material resources, and staffing to support assessment procedures. However, the school lacks a plan to effectively integrate the use of assessment data by all staff to improve teaching and learning. For example, a plan for how Galileo and other assessments will be utilized by staff to improve instruction has not been implemented. In addition, further staff development to fully embed Galileo as a school assessment tool has not been provided. Funding and tools for administering assessments are fully in place as there are many assessments and the technologies to implement them available to teachers. When professional development and the implementation of a school-wide assessment plan are in place, the effectiveness of staff to target the needs of all students through assessment procedures will be ensured. (test documents, teacher interviews, administrator interviews, building tour)

The school systematically interprets and reports its level of achievement of academic and social expectations for academic achievement to the parents and community through many opportunities. Monthly newsletters from teachers, website postings, Aitken to Know newsletter, Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, e-mails, and report cards are all actively utilized to share achievements and expectations. In particular, standards-based report cards provide information three times per year related to a student's achievement in meeting the social and academic expectations. Teachers provide students with feedback on their achievement toward some of the social expectations in their classroom lessons. Each fall the school adjustment counselor writes an article for parents called, "You want my kids to do what?" informing parents of student expectations and shifting responsibility to students at an early age. Consequently, these methods provide multiple ways by which the faculty and staff of the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School share students' level of achievement in meeting the social and academic expectations. (website, Aitken to Know, newsletters, bulletin boards, teacher interviews, parent interviews, administrator interviews)

Commendations

1. The collaboration of staff to foster collegial grade level relationships
2. The student ownership of their achievement of social expectations
3. The multiple forms of communication used to report student progress to parents and the community

Recommendations

1. Establish and implement a method to measure student progress toward achievement of the social and academic goals
2. Develop and fully implement school-wide grade level assessments in core content areas

3. Identify standards for each curricular area as the basis for assessing student progress
4. Ensure data from assessments is used by all staff in order to inform instruction
5. Implement with fidelity the district's current assessment software, Galileo, in identified content areas
6. Provide sufficient professional development to effectively implement programs and corresponding assessments

Elementary School Support Standards

Leadership and Organization
School Resources for Learning
Community Resources for Learning

5 Leadership and Organization

Leadership is the collaborative responsibility of administration, faculty, and support staff to achieve the mission and expectations of the school. The manner in which a school organizes itself, makes decisions, and treats its members affects the atmosphere in which teaching and learning take place. The school climate fosters mutual respect, as well as opportunities for reflection and growth among students and staff, and welcomes the meaningful involvement of parents and community members.

1. The principal provides leadership, facilitates the development and maintenance of a vision, and establishes a focus on student learning and growth.
2. The school's administration, faculty, and support staff are sufficient in number, appropriately qualified and share the collegial responsibility for implementing the mission and expectations of the school and effectively meeting the needs of the students.
3. There is a program of professional development, both district-wide and building-based, which is collaboratively planned, supports the school's mission and expectations and enables the faculty to strive to improve teaching and learning.
4. The school has a planned orientation program for new administrators, faculty, and support staff.
5. The school climate is positive, respectful, safe and orderly and encourages pride, growth, renewal, and constructive risk-taking among students and staff.
6. There is evidence of mutual respect, common purpose, and support among all members of the school community.
7. The school regularly acknowledges, celebrates and displays the work, contributions, and achievements of students and school personnel.
8. The school establishes developmentally appropriate rules, expectations, and consequences for student behavior and school attendance, which are clearly articulated to the entire school community.
9. The school encourages and supports a process of clear, consistent, and meaningful communication within the building, within the district and throughout the community.
10. The school encourages ongoing and effective home-school communication and provides avenues to address parents' questions and concerns.
11. The school welcomes parents and involves them in meaningful and effective activities to support the academic achievement and the emotional and social growth of their children.

12. The school has a clearly defined process for the evaluation and supervision of faculty, staff, and administration which is utilized for continual improvement of the quality of the school programs.
13. The school has clearly defined crisis/emergency response plans, and all occupants of the building are familiar with these procedures.

Conclusions

The principal provides leadership in developing and maintaining the mission focused on student and learning growth. The principal promotes the school mission with a focus on students during faculty meetings, meetings with parents, and in district administrative staff meetings. School council reviews the mission yearly as it relates to student growth and revises it when necessary. The principal shares the mission with staff and families at the beginning of the school year through multiple forms of communication such as the school website, newsletters, and at parent events. As a result of various forms of communication, the mission and focus on students is clearly articulated and implemented. (teacher interviews, school committee interviews, parent interviews)

The school's administration, faculty, and support staff are sufficient in most staffing areas, and all staff are qualified, and share the collegial responsibility for implementing the mission and expectations of the school to effectively meet the needs of the students. The Seekonk Public Schools' Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) Proposed Budget provides for new personnel additions for the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School. These include the following: .25 technology integration specialist, .5 psychologist/school psychology intern, .5 kindergarten aide, .5 kindergarten teacher, an assistant principal, an English as a Second Language teacher, an additional differentiated instruction teacher, and an instructional aide. The addition of teaching staff in the identified areas will continue to support meeting the diverse needs of all students in ensuring that all students are challenged to achieve at high levels. When sufficient staffing can support implementing the mission and goals to effectively meet the needs of all students, the needs of students' diverse learning styles will be met. (teacher interviews, support staff interviews, self-study, FY15 budget)

There are limited opportunities for professional development both district-wide and building-based which support the mission and expectations and enable the faculty to strive to improve teaching and learning. The district has one mandated professional development day that occurs prior to the start of the school year and two optional professional development days identified in the school year calendar. During the 2013-14 school year, the focus of professional development at the building level is on the educator evaluation system and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) self-study. There are limited opportunities for on-going embedded professional development for district-wide initiatives brought into the district such as Rubicon Atlas (curriculum mapping), Understanding by Design (standards-based unit design), and Lucy Calkins Units of Study in Writing. Current research articles and other relevant readings are provided to staff throughout the year by the building principal to support adult learning. The principal notifies and encourages staff to engage in professional development opportunities as they arise. When teachers are provided embedded professional development that has been collaboratively designed to meet their needs, improvements in teaching will impact growth for all students. (teacher interviews, principal interview, curriculum director interview, self-study)

There are many supports that the school offers as a part of a planned orientation program for new administrators, faculty, and support staff. New teachers attend a one-day summer workshop each year, are assigned a trained mentor to support them their first year in the district, and participate in a formal mentoring program for two years. There is an informal mentoring program for administrators.

Often positive and supportive relationships develop as a result of the mentorship and last beyond the scope of the program. As well as the formal mentor program, staff

are supported by grade level peers upon entry to the school. As a result of a well-planned orientation program, new staff staff are more likely to succeed in their practice. (principal interview, teacher interviews, self-study)

The school climate is always positive, respectful, safe, and orderly and encourages pride, growth, renewal, and constructive risk-taking among students and staff. Students and adults share a mutual respect between and among one another throughout the school including student arrival, passing in the corridors, in classrooms, and during lunch. Teachers remind students of safe and orderly conduct through verbal and visual prompts. Numerous signs, posters and visual displays in classrooms and in common areas always remind students. Teachers convey a deep sense of pride in their school. There are numerous examples of student pride on display throughout the school. A third grade student shared his experiences about school and examples of how he feels safe and comfortable in sharing concerns with teachers and the principal. Because of the pervasive belief that exists at this school regarding a positive school climate, students and staff are provided a learning environment conducive to learning and social growth. (facility tour, student shadowing, teacher interviews, principal interview, self-study, website, classroom and school-wide observations)

Throughout the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School community, there is collective agreement that mutual respect, common purpose, and support among all members of the school community are present at all times. One example is the modeling of these appropriate actions by both teachers, students, and the principal. When situations around a common purpose arise, are encouraged to work together and devise an action plan to resolve the issue for the betterment of the school community. As a result of such a supportive community, all stakeholders understand and work toward the common purpose of students first. (school-wide observations, teacher, parent, and school committee interviews)

Throughout all areas of the school, both in common areas and in classrooms, the school regularly acknowledges, celebrates and displays the work, contributions, and achievements of students and school personnel. Student work is displayed on bulletin boards in all hallway wings of the school. There are numerous locations throughout the school that display academic and social achievement of students. Using the public address system on a daily basis, the principal provides recognition and encouragement for both social and academic achievements. Students in grades one through five are invited to become involved in a vocabulary building initiative. The Math Problem of the Week Challenge is offered to fourth and fifth grade students. The Word of the Week for students in grades one through five is overseen by the media technology teacher. The results of school-wide initiatives can be found on bulletin boards located in the school. Upcoming events are posted on a bulletin board in the front lobby to encourage student, family, and staff participation. Updates on student achievement in the Accelerated Reader program are announced over the public address system and posted on a bulletin board in the school library. The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) celebrates staff appreciation week during the month of May. The principal reports the accomplishments of the students and staff to school committee and the school community. Due to the varied ways that students and staff are recognized for their contributions and achievements, a feeling of success and accomplishment permeates the school environment. (facility tour, student interviews, teacher interviews, self-study, panel presentation, video presentation, school-wide and classroom observations)

The school has established and implemented developmentally appropriate rules, expectations, and consequences for student behavior and school attendance, which are clearly articulated to the entire school community. The Pre-K through grade 5 discipline

policy can be found in the school handbook and on the 2013-14 school calendar. The district's elementary staff developed rules for the school, playground, and cafeteria. Each classroom teacher develops and posts classroom rules at the start of the school year. These rules are also shared with families. Student attendance requirements are clearly communicated to parents through the handbook and back-to-school events. Parents are required to call in their child's absence as one more means of student safety. As a result of these clearly established and implemented processes, students and parents are held accountable for behavior and attendance. (teacher interviews, classroom observations, student handbook and calendar, 2013 Massachusetts School Report Card Overview)

The school encourages and supports a process of clear, consistent, and meaningful communication within the building, within the district, and throughout the community. Communication within the school occurs through the public address system, e-mail, weekly bulletins, monthly staff meetings, grade level meetings, and postings within known locations throughout the school. The school communicates within the district through e-mail, school reports, and telephone communication. Community communication takes place through the school website, monthly community newsletter, weekly e-mails, activated phone messages, family text message reminders, family events, and parent meetings. Therefore, all stakeholders are well informed of the school's current happenings through clear, consistent, and meaningful communication. (principal, staff, and parent interviews, self-study)

There are numerous ways that the school encourages ongoing and effective home-school communication and provides avenues to address parents' questions and concerns. The principal has an "open door policy" for parents to be able to meet with her. Parent-teacher conferences are held a number of times throughout the school year. Staff encourages families to use e-mail for communication purposes. Also, the school nurse and out-of-district coordinator make home visits when required. As a result of these multiple means of communication, parents have numerous ways of communicating with school staff in a timely and efficient manner to speak with staff and address their questions and concerns. (principal, staff, and parent interviews)

Extensive opportunities are provided by the school welcoming parents and involving them in meaningful and effective activities to support the academic achievement and the emotional and social growth of their children. When new families enroll in the school, they are offered a tour of the school by the principal. Open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and presentations to parents on such things as the standards-based report card are offered to families. Parent guides on grade level standards are available on the district website and in the main office. Parents are welcome to become actively involved as volunteers throughout the year. The PTO is an active part of the school community and is open to all parents. There are several family and student events throughout the school year such as the Pumpkin Somthin', Sweetheart Dance, Boys' Day Out, and the Book Swap that support academic, emotional, and social endeavors. Hence, families have significant opportunities to support their student's social, emotional, and academic development. (student shadowing, facility tour, principal interview)

The school utilizes a clearly defined process for the evaluation and supervision of faculty, staff, and administration for the purpose of continual improvement of the quality of the school programs. Currently, teachers and administrators are in the first year of a new district-wide evaluation system. This evaluation system is for all professional and nonprofessional status staff in either a one-year or two-year plan. A minimum of five observations are conducted yearly by the principal on 50% of the staff along with a formative and summative assessment which are designed to improve instruction and student learning. Developing teachers have more frequent evaluations and assessments.

The new evaluation tool has been received positively as a result of sufficient professional development and support offered by the principal. The principal is also undergoing the evaluation process by being evaluated by the superintendent of schools. The secretarial staff, custodial staff, instructional aides, and supervisory aides are evaluated bi-annually their first year of employment and then yearly thereafter. Because there is a clearly defined evaluation process to support teacher effectiveness, there is a process to impact the continual improvement of the quality of the school programs. (educator evaluation document, Seekonk Supporting Students, principal interviews, teacher interviews)

The faculty is well informed about the clearly defined emergency response plans and all occupants of the building are familiar with these procedures. All faculty members are provided a review of the crisis and emergency response plans and/or any updates of it at the initial staff meeting of the school year. Each classroom has a plastic folder with all required crisis/emergency response plans in a specific location for ease in accessibility. The classrooms all have a “go to” spot for lock down purposes. Fire drills are planned, executed, and assessed within the state requirements. One lock down drill took place this year. Because the emergency plan has been communicated and practiced, the emergency response procedures assist faculty and students in implementing school security protocols. (crisis/emergency response plans, classroom observations of safe locations, teacher interviews)

Commendations

1. The principal’s leadership in establishing a positive, safe, and nurturing climate that helps promote learning
2. The multiple methods of communication by the principal and staff regarding student performance and school activities
3. The display of student work and achievement that embodies the pride of students, families, faculty, and community
4. The involvement of parents through the PTO and various family activities that support students and the school

Recommendations

1. Support mission and goals through additional staffing to meet the needs of all learners
2. Create and implement a professional development plan that addresses staff needs and district initiatives

6 School Resources for Learning

The school provides an effective range of integrated resources, programs, and services designed to enable all students to participate in and benefit from their educational experiences. Collectively, school resources, programs, and services support the individual academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of all students.

1. Student support services are designed to enable each student to participate in and benefit from the educational programs within the school and to support the school's mission and expectations.
2. Student support services personnel interact and work cooperatively with other school staff and community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students and to enhance student learning opportunities.
3. The physical areas provided for student support services are appropriate to the particular service.
4. Parents are kept informed about the range of available student support services and are involved in the coordination of services as they pertain to their children.
5. Services are in place to ensure the health and well being of the students, and information pertinent to the learning process and/or essential for safety is communicated to the appropriate faculty and staff.
6. The school maintains all student, administrative and personnel records in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal, state, and local laws or regulations.
7. The school's library technology and media services program has an appropriate space to ensure the accessibility of its technology and materials by students and teachers and is staffed by qualified personnel who are trained and supervised by a certified library media specialist.
8. The school's library technology and media services program has a wide range of print, non-print, and electronic materials and equipment which is appropriate to an elementary school, supportive of the curriculum, accessible to students and teachers, and reflective of a global and multi-cultural society. Materials and equipment are adequately maintained, catalogued, and updated.
9. The school's library technology and media program has clearly defined expectations which ensure that student needs for research and learning are met.
10. The school's faculty, staff and administration are familiar with the expectations the school's library technology and media services program and are directly involved in the selection of materials, equipment, and resources to complement and improve teaching and learning.

11. The school has policies in place for the Internet and for the selection and removal of print and non-print multi-media materials.

Conclusions

Student support services are designed to enable some students to participate in and benefit from the educational programs within the school and to support the school's mission and goals. Three special education teachers provide direct services to students with special needs in pull-out or pull aside settings. Some special educators co-teach with classroom teachers. A pre-referral process for students not making adequate progress is in place. In addition, there is a district suggested accommodation plan which is utilized as a part of the pre-referral process. Further, grade level teams have developed common accommodation lists. The Student Support Team states that there are inconsistencies in the use of accommodations within classrooms throughout all levels of the referral process. For some high at-risk students, not on Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and who have been identified as requiring specialized instruction, there are support services in place enabling those students to benefit from and participate more successfully in the general education programs. This year, the differentiated instruction teacher provides additional support services to some students who have been identified as at-risk in mathematics and reading. Services for students at risk in reading are mainly provided by the classroom teacher. The Reading Recovery program provides 1:1 additional instruction to students in grade 1 who are having difficulty in fluency and comprehension. Accelerated Reader, a computerized program, is a program used to support independent reading. However, additional services and specific reading programs for identified students are not consistently implemented in all grades. In addition, a plan for all teachers to fully implement Accelerated Reading with fidelity and to identify at-risk students in reading comprehension is lacking. The South Coast Educational Collaborative provides consultation, and in-house and/or out-of-district services as necessary to support students and staff. Some students who are identified as requiring specialized instruction have access to assistive technology as indicated in their IEPs. As a result, student support services are designed to enable a student to participate and benefit from the educational programs; however, not all students who need additional support receive services. (Standard committee interview, student support team interview, teacher interviews, self-study)

Student support services personnel periodically interact and work cooperatively with other school staff and community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students and to enhance student learning opportunities. Not all support service staff are currently available during common planning time with grade level teachers; however, informal collaboration happens on an as-needed basis due to the dedicated efforts of the staff. Student work is frequently shared when there is a concern regarding a particular student's lack of progress. The academic needs of students are currently addressed by both special education teachers and instructional aides in integrated and pull-out settings. Special education teachers communicate and meet with instructional aides on a weekly basis to discuss student progress and concerns. Technology is available to enhance instruction across all grade levels. The school adjustment counselor provides support for social and emotional needs of students through the Second Step and Steps to Respect programs. The adjustment counselor also services the majority of her caseload through lunch and focus groups for students struggling with social and emotional issues. A recent increase in the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students created the need for an additional special education teacher for a new substantially separate program called ABLES Junior. When collaboration between student support services personnel and other school staff occurs on a regularly planned or scheduled basis, student learning opportunities will be enhanced. (teacher interviews, special education manual, Standard committee interviews, student support team interviews)

Some physical areas provide for appropriate student support services to be delivered. Shared office space among three special education teachers, the occupational therapist (OT), and the speech and language pathologist creates a need for creative use of other spaces within the school. This office space is also utilized to deliver small group instruction by the special education teachers and instructional aides. School administration has created shared spaces throughout the school to better address student needs during pull-out services. English language learner (ELL) services are provided solely in a pull-out model in a very small office space. Because the service provider is utilized among two other schools, service time is not always adequate for meeting the levels of all ELL students in accordance with state guidelines. Additional space for small group instruction necessary to support services to students continues to be an issue in a building where space is limited. When the physical areas designated for student support services are adequate, the range of services required to meet student needs can be fully accommodated. (teacher interviews, facility tour, Standard committee interview, student support team interview, classroom observations)

Parents are consistently informed regarding the range of available student support services and are involved in the coordination of services. Parents are always involved in the pre-referral process for their children. Several student support service staff contribute to the school's monthly newsletter. April's Aitken to Know newsletter included contributions from the school psychologist, Reading Recovery teachers, school adjustment counselor, and library media specialist. The student handbook directs parents to contact the director of special education with questions regarding their child's progress but does not outline steps in place to work with the Student Support Team at the school. Parents often initiate Student Support Team meetings and utilize the expertise of the school psychologist and support services available to them through this team. Student support services are communicated to parents at the back-to-school open house and conferences can be set up at the beginning of the school year. Consequently, the multiple methods utilized by Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School's support services staff adequately inform parents of available services within the school. (student handbook, April's Aitken to Know newsletter, website, student support team interview)

Services are in place, readily available, and utilized to ensure the health and well-being of students, and information pertinent to the learning process and/or essential for safety is communicated to the appropriate faculty and staff. Students with pervasive medical needs have individual health care plans which are shared with faculty and staff to ensure the student's safety. The school district's nursing staff has a goal to review and revise policies and procedures to bring to the school committee for approval, a process that has not occurred for seven years. The nursing staff collectively reviews and revises policies on a two-year cycle to ensure compliance with state mandates. Consequently, health services provide for the safety and well-being of the students is in compliance with state regulations and student needs. (health services policies and procedures, interviews, Standard committee meeting)

The school deliberately maintains all student, administrative, and personnel records in a confidential and secure manner in compliance with federal, state, and local laws or regulations. Health records are stored within the nurse's office in a locked file cabinet and backed up on the web-based program, SNAP. Student IEPs as well as original personnel files are stored at central office. Copies of student IEPs are available to be signed out from the school psychologist's office for teacher reference. All general cumulative student files are stored in the building's front office, which are able to be signed out by staff. The principal maintains files on building personnel for evaluative purposes. Consequently, all student, administrative, and personnel files are maintained in a confidential and secure manner. (facility tour, interviews, administration interviews)

The school's library technology and media services program has an appropriate and extensive space to ensure, at times, the accessibility of its technology and materials by students and teachers and is staffed by qualified personnel who are trained and supervised by a certified library media specialist. The library media specialist is licensed. Despite attempts to hire a support person to monitor and maintain material circulation, the library technology and media specialist is responsible for maintaining the school's print, non-print, and technology materials. The media specialist has created a system where teachers can sign out iPads or MacBooks. However, making the library and technology labs available for classes to utilize is problematic given the library media specialist's role as an itinerant teacher for the entire school. Although there is extensive space and availability of technology and media services, when the ability to access the resources of the library media center throughout the school day, use of technology and materials for all staff and students will be ensured. (facility tour, observations, interviews, technology team interview)

The library technology and media services program has an extensive range of print, non-print, and electronic equipment and materials appropriate to an elementary school, supportive of the curriculum, accessible to teachers and students, and reflective of a global and multicultural society. Materials and equipment are adequately maintained, catalogued, and updated. Changes in staffing in the district's technology department limit some accessibility of staff to work with all teachers to fully integrate available technology within their instruction. New materials are ordered for the library and media services biannually in the fall and spring. As a result of the appropriate print, non-print, and technology resources, the school's library technology and media services program is supportive of the curriculum and accessible to students and teachers. (facility tour, observations, interviews, technology team interview)

The school's library technology and media program has clearly defined expectations which ensure that student needs for research and learning are being met. The library media specialist deliberately and regularly designs lessons which follow the standards being addressed in the classroom. The library media specialist met with teachers three years ago to divide which Massachusetts Frameworks are taught by the teachers and which the library and media specialist addresses. Library and media policies and procedures provide standards to ensure student needs are being met for research and literacy skills. The library media and technology specialist creates rubrics for all projects done within the technology lab which have been shared with teachers through the school's server. Rubrics aligned to the standards taught in the classroom are created by the library technology and media specialist to measure student achievement. As a result of the clear expectations established by the library technology and media specialist, student needs for research and learning are met in accordance with the standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. (student work, observations, teacher and library media specialist interviews, library media services policies and procedures)

The school's faculty, staff, and administration are familiar with the expectations of the school's library technology and media services program and are directly involved in the selection of materials, equipment, and resources to complement and improve teaching and learning. Teachers have access to iPads and laptop carts through a technology sign-out sheet. Students and staff have library accounts and can sign out materials. In addition, students and staff have the ability to request print materials not found in the school's library collection through the SAILS catalog program which is accessible on computers. The librarian assists teachers and students in solicitation of materials. Solicitation for new materials is done biannually in the fall and spring and open to both teachers and students. Requests are generally made through e-mail and are

done to meet the needs of teaching and learning in accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Time constraints and the librarian's schedule limit time for students and staff to independently access library materials. Despite some limitations in time, the available materials and equipment improve and complement teaching and learning within the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School. (library media services policies and procedures documents, teacher and library media specialist interviews, observations in the media center)

The school has policies in place for the Internet and for the selection and removal of print and non-print multi-media materials. The library technology and media services program policies for Internet usage expectations are clearly stated in the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). In addition, the district's Technology Committee is charged with ensuring the effective use and safe handling of the internet. However, the library technology and media specialist, in conjunction with other district specialists, recognizes the need for an updated procedure for the selection and weeding of materials. The current policy is 15-years-old and cites a School Media Advisory Committee which is now embodied by the district and building technology teams. However, the district technology plan does include some policy related topics such as a replacement plan for materials. The school's usage policies have been established; however, the system for selection and removal of print and non-print media materials is out-of-date. When the selection and removal of print and non-print multi-media materials is reviewed and updated as necessary, its currency and proper use will be ensured. (2010-2015 technology plan, library media services policies and procedures documents, interviews with library media specialist, observations)

Commendations

1. The collaborative efforts of the staff to support the academic and social needs of students
2. The adequacy of materials in the library media center that support the curricula
3. The commitment and support provided through the services of the library technology and media specialist

Recommendations

1. Develop a plan to better utilize and access library and technology media resources
2. Update the policy for selection and removal of print and non-print library media materials
3. Ensure all students at risk receive appropriate services in adequate settings

7 Community Resources for Learning

The community supports the school by providing consistent and sufficient funding for programs, services, personnel, and facilities. It sustains a learning environment that ensures the safety and well-being of all students. Active community and parent involvement is essential for the achievement of the school's mission and expectations.

1. The community, through its school board, provides educational leadership, sets, and disseminates policy, and ensures an adequate and reliable revenue source.
2. The community, through its school board, provides appropriate school programs, personnel, professional development programs, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning.
3. The school and the school district have an ongoing planning process which addresses capital improvement needs as well as future program, technology, staffing, and facility needs.
4. The faculty and administration of the school are actively involved in the development of the school's budget which is supportive of the school's mission and expectations.
5. Relationships with the community-at-large foster partnerships, develop and strengthen communication, and encourage mutual cooperation and good citizenship.
6. The school building and grounds provide a setting for an appropriate, positive, and safe learning environment.
7. There is a planned, on-going program of building and site maintenance to ensure the health and safety of the occupants and proper documentation is on file to indicate the school's compliance with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
8. If food services are provided, the area, menu, and equipment ensure that the well-being of students is a priority and is in compliance with state and federal regulations.
9. If transportation is provided, appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the students.

Conclusions

The community, through its school committee, consciously provides educational leadership, sets and disseminates policy, and ensures an adequate and reliable revenue source. The school committee has worked hard to create transparency and supports a budget that includes the materials and resources to support the school's mission and goals. For the past three years, the school committee provided a level services budget to the school community. The committee is currently working on a joint venture with the town to combine technology resources to ensure a higher level of technology for the school district and the town. As a result, the school committee and the community provide educational leadership, set and disseminate policy, and ensure an adequate and reliable revenue source to support the mission of high academic standards for students. (school committee interview, principal interview, central office interviews)

The community, through its school committee, consistently provides appropriate school programs, personnel, professional development programs, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning. Over the last few years the community has provided a 65 percent share of the town's financial capacity percent to fund for school district's programs, personnel, professional development programs, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials and supplies for student learning on a yearly basis through their budget process. The fiscal year 2014 (FY14) budget supports funding district-wide professional development days and outside professional development workshops, updates to the facility, and new technology equipment such as whiteboards, iPad carts, laptops, document cameras, and digital cameras. However, the budget did not have sufficient funding to restore four support service faculty positions that were lost previously. Recently, the school committee has worked to develop a budget that provides for increases in school programs, personnel, professional development programs, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials and supplies for student learning. The current budget provides for some increases in addressing the need for additional professional development programs, space issues, and personnel. As a result, the school committee has worked to establish a culture that ensures leadership in policy and budget development necessary to ensure an adequate budget to meet the needs of all learners. (school committee interviews, central office interviews, principal interviews)

There is a formal ongoing planning process which addresses the capital improvement needs as well as future program, technology, staffing, and facility needs in the school and the school district. There is a five-year capital improvement plan (CIP) that is reviewed yearly by the school committee, maintenance director, finance committee, and school council. Over the next five years, the CIP for Aitken includes replacing a roof, renovating the front entrance for security reasons, repaving the parking lot, and replacing the heating-ventilation-air conditioning (HVAC) system. At this time, there is no plan for a facility expansion even though the school committee and administration state and understand the need for additional space to better serve the needs of all students.

At the request of the Town of Seekonk, the school district has developed multi-year projections for budgets. The FY15 budget proposal priority list includes a request for additional staff at the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School in professional and support personnel, for example, for another differentiated teacher and an instructional aide. With an increase in special education costs over the past five years, the town approved a special education contingency fund of \$75,000 for unforeseen increases that may occur during the school year. The Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School has a technology committee that meets monthly with the Seekonk Technology Committee to plan for current and future needs. There is a 2010-2015 school technology plan in place

that has been approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Consequently, there is an ongoing planning process which addresses capital improvements for the facility, staffing needs, educational services, and technology so that the school district and the town can project and plan for future needs and the associated costs. (school committee interviews, Capital Improvement Plan document, self-study)

The faculty and administration have extensive opportunities to be actively involved in the development of the school budget to support the mission and expectations. There is a budget timeline in place. The principal asks the staff to provide her with budget requests for supplies and materials necessary for teaching and learning, including technology. Once the principal receives the budget requests from the staff, she consolidates them and presents the school's preliminary budget to the superintendent and other central office staff. The principal works with the central office staff, the school committee, and the school council to finalize the budget. Following school committee approval of the district's budget, it is presented at town meeting in June. The school committee relies heavily on the administrative team for budget recommendations that guide educational programs and services of the building. Because the faculty and administration are involved in the development of the school's budget, it collectively supports the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School's mission and expectations. (school committee interview, principal interview, business manager interview)

There is an extensive relationship with the community-at-large that fosters, develops, and strengthens communication, and encourages mutual cooperation and good citizenship. Aitken's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) is a vital partner of the school and its staff and students. The PTO provides school supplies to every student at the beginning of the year, conducts an annual walk-a-thon, facilitates Box Tops for Education, and provides \$20.00 per student for field trips. In addition, when needs arise the PTO offers financial assistance such as for playground equipment, the Accelerated Reader program, Creative Awareness Week, and Staff Appreciation Week. The PTO also coordinates enrichment activities as a weekly Spanish class, Museum of Science trip, Reading Week, and Field Day.

The Aitken School has developed strong relationships with service organizations such as Kiwanis, Lions Club, and the Seekonk Fire Department. In addition, Aitken has received recent grants from Wal-Mart, BJ's Wholesale Club, and Staples for supplies. Local businesses assist at various school functions with donations of food, gift cards, and supplies. Students have the ability to interact with the community and to experience community service at school events such as the Veterans Day program, Memorial Day program, 9/11 ceremony, and tree lighting ceremony. Thus, the strong relationship with the community develops and strengthens communication and encourages mutual cooperation and good citizenship for students. (school committee interview, central office interviews, principal interviews, teacher interviews, self-study)

The school building and grounds regularly provide a setting for an appropriate, positive, and safe learning environment. The school building is clean, neat, and orderly. The rooms are well designed with adequate space for grade level classes, technology, and supplies and materials. There are adequate rooms for art, music, physical education and support services such as the adjustment counselor and nurse. There is also a library and computer lab. However, special service areas that house professional support staff such as the occupational therapist are, for the most part, shared and limited. The English language learner (ELL) teacher shares space according to a set schedule.

The head custodian provides a master list of cleaning standards and daily duties that is followed by all custodial staff. The grounds are well maintained and provide the

students with many opportunities at recess. The playground equipment is located at the back of the building and away from the street and an integrated preschool playground set was recently installed. There is a basketball court and a paved area when the grounds are not able to be used due to weather conditions. The field is used as a walking track, playing field for baseball, and many other activities. All play areas are handicap accessible except for the play structures and swings.

Security is well thought out for the building and grounds. Security cameras and outside lighting are strategically positioned around the outside of the building. The front door has a buzzer and intercom system used before guests enter. All outside doors are locked throughout the day. All classroom doors are locked during school hours. All staff have a key fob to enter the building. During arrival and dismissal of students, the principal and the staff supervise the hallways, doors, and outside of the building where the students are walking. Overall, Aitken School provides an appropriate, positive, and safe learning environment both inside and outside the building. (maintenance director interview, custodian interviews, facility and grounds tour)

There is a regular, planned, ongoing program of building and site maintenance to ensure the health and safety of the occupants and proper documentation is on file to indicate the school's compliance with local, state, and federal law and regulations throughout the school year. The maintenance director oversees all necessary fire, health, and safety regulations for the school district. He coordinates all inspections for each school and is present at each inspection. Copies of reports are given to the building administrator and kept in the principal's office. Most inspections are completed in August, prior to school opening. The building inspector and the fire department inspect the school annually. Fire extinguishers are properly tagged and updated as required. The stage lift is inspected annually and properly tagged. The cafeteria kitchen is inspected three times per year by the state health inspector to ensure cleanliness; kitchen equipment is well maintained and all personnel are trained in food safety. The playground area is inspected daily by supervisory aides and any issues are reported immediately to the custodian. Bathrooms and including handicap bathrooms are accessible to all. The corridors, doors, and rooms are numbered and handicap accessible, including Braille signage. There is an updated intercom system in each room along with phones so that a staff member can dial 911 in case of an emergency. As a result, the ongoing building and site maintenance plan and documentation of compliance with local, state, and federal laws and regulations, ensure the school provides for the health and safety of the occupants. (maintenance director interviews, principal interview, custodian interviews, facility and grounds tour)

A well designed food service program is provided to ensure that the well being of the students is a priority and is in compliance with state and federal regulations. Chartwells, an outside food service provider, has serviced the school district for nine years. The food service director, who is an employee of Chartwells, oversees the school district food program. The director develops the monthly menus, inventories the food products, and provides and oversees adequate staffing in buildings. All staff meet monthly for training and reviewing regulations. The head cook supervises a staff of two employees. The head cook develops food choices that the students find appetizing and at the same time comply with federal regulations for food portions, nutrition, and the requirements for reimbursable meals. The head cook's innovativeness is one factor in the increase in food service sales and the decrease in waste in the building. Consequently, food services are in compliance with state and federal guidelines and provide for the well being of students. (food service director interview, kitchen staff interview, self-study)

Transportation services have appropriate procedures in place to ensure the safety of the students. The school provides a competent bus service for all students that ensures the safety of the students through appropriate procedures. The transportation director, an employee of the school district, oversees all bus services for regular and special education students. Students practice two evacuation drills a year. Students ride the buses no longer than 40 minutes each way. Students are expected to follow the bus rules posted on the bus and in the parent-student handbook. There is a process in place for discipline where issues are filtered through the transportation director. When buses arrive in the morning, they are greeted by the principal and staff members. At dismissal, the students line up by bus number in the hall in an orderly way. As buses arrive, students are dismissed. Cars are not allowed in the bus circle during arrival and dismissal. Consequently, appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the students while accessing school transportation. (transportation director interviews, observations, walkthroughs, self-study)

Commendations

1. The contributions provided by the parent-teacher and community organizations
2. The efforts to build strong relationships with various community groups and organizations
3. The well maintained facility and grounds that provide a safe and healthy learning environment

Recommendations

1. Ensure adequate funding to support student learning
2. Address the identified space needs for programs and services

Follow-up Responsibilities

This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students at the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School. The faculty, school committee, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

Since it is in the best interest of the students that the citizens of the district become aware of the strengths and limitations of the school and suggested recommendations for improvement, the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Committee's Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress through the follow-up process, the Committee requires that the principal of the Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Committee in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Committee may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within 60 days of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Information Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

The Committee urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the evaluation report. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and reporting requirements is provided at follow-up seminars offered by Committee staff following the on-site visit.

The visiting committee wishes to commend all those that contributed time and energy toward the completion of the self-study, as well as toward the preparation and hosting of the visit. We enjoyed participating in this collaborative professional

experience. We hope that this visiting committee evaluation report, in conjunction with the strengths and needs determined during your self-study, will serve as rich resources for your short- and long-term planning and that they will assist you as you continue to strengthen education for your students.

Appendix

**Mildred H. Aitken Elementary School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
April 5-8, 2013**

Visiting Committee

<p>Kristine E. Nash, Ed.D., Chair Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District Lakeville, MA</p> <p>Celeste Bowler, Ph.D., Assistant Chair Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Wenham, MA</p> <p>Jean Kobeski Walpole Elementary School Walpole, NH</p> <p>Suzanne Lull Rye Elementary School Rye, NH</p> <p>Sarah Potter Deerfield Community School Deerfield, NH</p>	<p>Anita Rodriguez Middleborough Public Schools Middleborough, MA</p> <p>Kayla Satchell Leroy L. Wood Elementary School Fairhaven, MA</p> <p>Susan Schroeter Unity Elementary School Claremont, NH</p> <p>Amy Silva Leroy L. Wood Elementary School Fairhaven, MA</p>
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SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Expectations

Commendations

1. The mission statement that is reflected in the nurturing, welcoming character of the school
2. The involvement of faculty, staff, parents, and school council in the development of the school's mission and expectations
3. The knowledge and support of the staff and educational community in implementing the mission and expectations for student learning
4. The use of the mission statement to guide decision making and implementation of programs and activities

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a method to assess the level of achievement of each of the school's academic and social expectations
2. Include opportunities for comprehensive community review of mission and goals
3. Establish clearly measurable academic and social goals that reflect rigor and relevance for 21st century learning

Curriculum

Commendations

1. The willingness and eagerness of the staff to engage in professional development opportunities in curriculum development
2. The partnering of itinerant teachers and classroom teachers to enrich the curriculum
3. The support for the enhancement of authentic application of the curriculum provided by the parent-teacher organization

Recommendations

1. Write and implement curricula with clearly articulated learning standards for all content areas and all grades
2. Ensure vertical curriculum articulation takes place in all curricular areas in order to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum
3. Develop and implement a systematic and ongoing process for curriculum development, review, evaluation, and revision
4. Provide all staff with adequate professional development in the district's curriculum mapping software and curriculum development

Instruction

Commendations

1. The school-wide focus on incorporating social skills into instruction and fostering good behavior
2. The availability and successful use of technology across the curriculum
3. The willingness of the staff to work individually and collectively to improve instruction

Recommendations

1. Provide training in and incorporate the use of higher order thinking skills as routine instructional practice
2. Provide consistent opportunities for staff in grade level and cross grade teams to collaborate on best practices to improve student learning
3. Employ research-based instructional practices aimed at meeting the needs of a range of learners in and across all grade levels
4. Provide ongoing professional development training to maximize the effectiveness of implementation of new district initiatives
5. Ensure staffing is appropriate to meet the needs of all learners

Assessment of Learning

Commendations

1. The working relationships with colleagues within grade levels conducive to collaboration
2. The student ownership of their achievement of social expectations
3. The multiple forms of communication used to report student progress to parents and the community

Recommendations

1. Establish and implement a method to measure student progress toward achievement of the social and academic goals
2. Develop and fully implement school-wide grade level assessments in core content areas
3. Identify standards for each curricular area as the basis for assessing student progress
4. Ensure data from assessments is used by all staff in order to inform instruction
5. Implement with fidelity the district's current assessment software, Galileo, in identified content areas
6. Provide sufficient professional development to effectively implement programs and corresponding assessments

Leadership and Organization

Commendations

1. The principal's leadership in establishing a positive, safe, and nurturing climate that helps promote learning

2. The multiple methods of communication by the principal and staff regarding student performance and school activities
3. The display of student work and achievement that embodies the pride of students, families, faculty, and community
4. The involvement of parents through the PTO and various family activities that support students and the school

Recommendations

1. Support mission and goals through sufficient staffing to meet the needs of all learners
2. Create and implement a professional development plan that addresses staff needs and district initiatives

School Resources for Learning

Commendations

1. The collaborative efforts of the staff to support the academic and social needs of students
2. The adequacy of materials in the library media center that support the curricula
3. The commitment and support provided through the services of the library technology and media specialist

Recommendations

1. Develop a plan to better utilize and access library and technology media resources
2. Update the policy for selection and removal of print and non-print library media materials
3. Ensure all students at risk receive appropriate services in adequate settings

Community Resources for Learning

Commendations

1. The contributions provided by the parent-teacher and community organizations
2. The efforts to build strong relationships with various community groups and organizations
3. The well maintained facility and grounds that provide a safe and healthy learning environment

Recommendations

1. Ensure adequate funding to support student learning
2. Address the identified space needs for programs and services

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Committee within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has a *negative impact* on the school's ability to meet any of the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of a 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 students with limited English proficiency