



Teaching and Learning Standard
**Core Values, Beliefs, and
21st Century Learning Expectations**

Narrative

Sample High School has been engaged in a dynamic and inclusive process based on best practices to identify, develop and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. This process involved stakeholders from every relevant constituency including students, parents, faculty, school and district administrators and the school committee. The process was overseen by the school's leadership team, a group comprising six elected faculty members, two administrators, two students and a parent/school committee chair. Initially, upon reading NEASC's new standards for accreditation, the Leadership team determined that revisiting and updating the school's core values was in order and embarked on a mission to involve the entire school community in the process. The initial process involved a number of meetings wherein Leadership team members delved into relevant research including writings by Dr. Robert Marzano, information from the Partnership for 21st Century Learning Skills, core values of other schools who had recently undergone accreditation, and other documents surrounding the development of such values. From there Leadership team developed a research-based protocol asking constituents to brainstorm lists of words that were of utmost importance to the school and its community.

Though all constituencies were invited to participate in portions of the development of this protocol and did so to varying degrees, the student body was the first group required to participate in its initial stages during "State of the School" day in the early Fall of 2011. State of the School Day occurs during an actual school day, but takes place in lieu of two academic classes so as to bring the entire student body, faculty and administrators together in an effort to assess the state of the school, and to work together on plans and initiatives focused on improvement. The goal of the protocol used during the Fall 2011 State of the School Day was to develop a list of words that represented important aspects of the school, its expectations, its hopes for students: its values. In groups, students were asked to pore over documents including the then current equivalent of core values, our mission and vision, syllabi, the school handbook and a number of related materials

that would help to inform their work. The day's work produced a list of nearly 100 words that students felt represented the school's Core Values in some way, shape or form. These words were later written on symbolic "bodies" to represent that the school indeed embodies them.

The next step in the protocol involved a narrowing down of the overall list into categories, so as to find words that might serve as overarching values under which a number of related values might fall. This step was conducted twice: once by the full faculty, and once by the Student Council--a group of 32 students (eight from each class year--some elected, some appointed by elected students) that serves as the school's student government. Both groups successfully organized the words into much more manageable lists, which were given back to the Leadership team for further examination, and to finalize the overarching and related values. The result was the "Three Cs": Character; Community; and Citizenship. Further work was done to narrow related values that serve as indicators of the overarching Three Cs. For "Character," indicators included: integrity; perseverance; respect; and courage. For "Community": leadership; service; responsibility; and ethical problem solving. For "Citizenship": tolerance; teamwork; a safe environment; and pride. Following this process, the proposed Core Values began their journey through the various voting constituencies, including the Leadership team, the Student Council, the full faculty and the school committee. That journey ended with their acceptance by all parties--and official adoption--in the Fall of 2012.

The start of the 2012 school year brought with it a focused effort to publicize and embed these newly adopted Core Values. First, the Leadership team sponsored a student art contest (actually held in Spring of 2011) to develop a logo associated with the Core Values so as to create banners to be displayed throughout the building. The winner was determined by a student panel and three large banners have since been produced and displayed in prominent positions throughout the school. Additionally, faculty t-shirts promoting the Core Values were produced and distributed so as to further ingrain the Three Cs presence in the school culture. Plans currently exist to make a number of smaller sized banners for display in classrooms, offices, teacher pods and other applicable areas, and the school intends to produce laminated posters and other representations of the Three Cs for use in classrooms and common areas.

The 2012 State of the School Day focused on the question: What do our Core Values look like in practice? Again, the Leadership team developed a protocol for the entire student body, and on September 28th, 2012, students engaged in a process to determine what the Core Values looked like in action. The end product of that day was a set of three large sized "scrolls" and twelve "shields" (in keeping with our school mascot), each representing either one of the overarching values (the scrolls) or one of the related values (the shields). This process helped students to see that their work from last year did not stop there, and that the Core Values are something the school lives, rather than something solely existing on paper.

Admittedly, there is more work to do, as the unveiling of these new Core Values is only a few months old. Nevertheless, much work has already been completed, and for years SHS has embodied these ideas and concepts despite the new language of the values themselves. Student Led Conferences, which have been employed since the school's inception, are now focusing on the Three Cs and sub-words as a means of determining students' success and progress. Last year's freshman class began the process of creating "digital portfolios" that document progress related to the Three Cs as well. In all, it is safe to say that the larger challenge for SHS is for the school community to recognize the language being used to describe its Core Values, as the values themselves are ones that the school, its students, faculty and greater community, have been demonstrating for years.

The school has identified challenging and measurable 21st Century Learning Expectations for all students which address academic, social and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted levels of achievement. Early in the school's preparation for accreditation, the Leadership team reviewed the current learning expectations in an effort to determine whether their focus was in alignment with the standards surrounding 21st Century Learning Expectations. The determination was that although the school's expectations were likely adequate, some revision and consideration was warranted, and thus a process was undertaken to revamp them. First, the Leadership team began the process of identifying areas where expectations were a given (Reading, Writing, Problem-Solving, etc.). Critical thinking was done faculty-wide regarding the creation of new or updated expectations given the rapidly evolving world of technology, and careful consideration of where certain expectations would fall given the categories of "academic," "social," and "civic." Using such sources as the newly published Common Core Standards, Marzano, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and George Polya, the Leadership team, learning areas and the faculty revised the current learning

expectations into ones more closely aligned with the essence of the 21st Century Learning Expectations. The result was a set of twelve expectations divided among the categories (see the document at the end of this narrative for their layout). These expectations were later approved by all constituencies.

Next, the Leadership team developed a process whereby members of learning areas or other school constituencies deemed most linked to each expectation were asked to draft their associated rubrics. This allowed for the school community members most familiar with each expectation to have the initial input, while ensuring that the language was in keeping with the goal of developing 21st Century Learning Expectations. Once the language was written, each expectation was given to the full faculty for questions and comments during a regularly scheduled after-school meeting. That session yielded valuable suggestions for revision. After the revisions were made, each expectation was voted on and approved in faculty meetings.

Following the approval of the expectations, the development of analytic rubrics to measure the 21st Century Learning Expectations was begun. Initially, the Leadership team made determinations regarding which learning areas would be responsible for reporting out which expectations to students, parents and the community. Learning areas with a primary responsibility for reporting on a particular expectation were given the task of writing the analytic rubrics for those expectations (for example, the humanities department was responsible for drafting both the Reading and Writing rubrics, among others, while science, math, and technology were given the task of writing the Problem-Solving rubric, and so on). Regarding the measurable nature of the rubrics, SHS is a school at the forefront of standards-based grading, having used it since its opening. As a result, creating and implementing research-based analytic rubrics for the measurement of standards or expectations is a strength that is demonstrated as much with regard to the newly revised 21st Century Learning Expectations as it is across the board at SHS. On top of this, the Common Core Standards and the writings of Marzano, ISTE, and Polya, among others, were again referenced so as to base the analytic rubrics in current research. Though the process is still underway with regard to fully implementing these rubrics school-wide, confidence is high with regard to their adoption across the varying constituencies, their school-wide implementation and their efficacy.

The school's recently developed Core Values and beliefs, and recently revised 21st Century Learning Expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, have begun to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in a majority of classrooms, and help to guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations. Though the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations involve newly adopted language, they are--and have been--actively reflected in the school community and culture as a whole for years. Given that the foundational Core Values were developed beginning with the students themselves, they represent an environment that our school community is clearly accustomed to. Existing structures including Advisory, J-Board (student judiciary board), Response to Intervention, Restorative Practices, State of the School Day, Winter Carnival, and many more, are exemplars of SHS's school culture reflecting the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations. Students' ability to declare what these Core Values look like in action during the most recent State of the School day substantiates this.

With regard to curriculum, SHS has undertaken a school-wide review, revision and documentation of curriculum. This process has been focused on aligning the written and taught curriculum with the school's Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations. Faculty in every learning area have been asked to document, unit by unit and assessment by assessment, the curriculum in each of their classes. Administrators have reviewed these documents with an eye toward the newly formed Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations. Though instructional practices have not yet been formally aligned with the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations, teachers have clearly begun the process of revising the curriculum to be in tune with these documents, and revising assessment rubrics to include the new language from the analytic rubrics. Further, they are being asked to indicate on assessments the 21st Century Learning Expectations that might serve as evidence in progress toward meeting those expectations. As these initiatives take hold, the nature of classroom instruction will be driven by the expectations and values as well.

In terms of the school culture as a whole, SHS has long been driven by a progressive set of values that already embodied the most recently written Core Values and beliefs. Programs such as Advisory (a program that avails all students of a faculty advisor that remains the same throughout their four years of high school) foster the Three Cs and the sub-words in many ways beside their obvious curricular,

instructional and assessment connections. Days such as State of the School Day and Winter Carnival reinforce the importance of each Core Value in ways that cannot necessarily be replicated in the classroom, but serve to demonstrate that those values remain intact regardless of whether students, faculty and community members are there for a "school day" or otherwise. Expectations and assessments beyond the traditional curriculum such as Student Led Conferences, Sophomore Exhibition and Senior Celebration all embody the Core Values and beliefs as well, and are now being directly driven by the 21st Century Learning Expectations. Beyond these, such programs, activities and initiatives as: Philosophy of Athletics, the cafeteria's healthy food options, teams/co-curriculars trophy case, Special Olympics, the "R-word" campaign, a school store run by students, yearbook, the sexual assault crisis center drop-in service and hotline, the school newspaper, nut free zones, the guidance graduation display in the lobby and Go Green Club, among others, all serve as evidence that the school's Core Values and beliefs are embedded in its culture. Although there is more work to be done regarding the connection between the new language and the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations themselves, they are reflected actively in the school's culture and its greater community.

The school is in the process of developing a plan to review and revise its Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations, which it will base on research and multiple data sources, as well as district and community priorities. Given that the school is still in the process of implementing the new language associated with the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations, a review at this time would be premature. The school community needs time to fully institute these newly revised and/or developed ideals before engaging in revision. However, the Leadership team is well aware of the need to develop such a plan, and has already begun discussions regarding what it might look like and entail. Further, after two years of difficult times at the district level (four failed budgets and the departure of the former superintendent), the school committee has committed to a path toward developing a strategic plan. With those difficult times in the past, the development of the plan is full steam ahead and will inform the Leadership team's plans for reviewing and revising the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations in the near future.

Sample High School

Core Values & Beliefs

Mission Statement

21st Century Learning Expectations

Core Values & Beliefs

Sample High School's core values guide our decisions and anchor our actions and in the pursuit of learning. We are committed to fostering:

Character

integrity
perseverance
respect
courage

Citizenship

leadership
service
responsibility
ethical problem-solving

Community

tolerance
teamwork
a safe environment
pride

Mission Statement

To teach all students to use their minds well and to cultivate their particular talents
To establish a culture of respect, responsibility, service and courage
To demand excellence and to foster lifelong learning in a safe, welcoming environment

Learning Expectations

Social

- The SHS student demonstrates self-awareness through the pursuit of personal wellness and appropriate social and personal interactions.
- The SHS student takes responsibility for academic and future goals and decision making.
- The SHS student demonstrates effective habits of work and ethical and tolerant behavior.
- The SHS student uses technology in a socially responsible manner.

Civic

- The SHS student participates as an active citizen in the school and broader community and contributes positively to both.

Academic

- The SHS student speaks and presents effectively.
- The SHS student effectively uses the arts for informative purposes and expression.
- The SHS student reads, understands and interprets a variety of texts.
- The SHS student uses complex and creative reasoning strategies to generate appropriate solutions to a variety of problems.
- The SHS student writes in a clear and engaging manner.
- The SHS student utilizes technology for a variety of academic purposes.
- The SHS student accesses, evaluates, and uses information efficiently, effectively, and critically.



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Executive Summary

Sample High School has engaged in a dynamic and inclusive process informed by current research to identify its Core Values and beliefs about learning. This process enabled the school to revisit and renew its long term commitment to research-based, values driven, education. The development of the Core Values and the reaffirmation of its beliefs about learning have served to benefit the entire school community from students to district administrators.

The school has identified and developed challenging and measurable 21st Century Learning Expectations for all students which address academic, social and civic competencies, and are defined in observable and measurable terms by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement. The development of these expectations and rubrics has enabled the school to create a more uniform curriculum, review instructional and assessment practices and affirm its school culture as one that values specific academic, social and civic tenets.

The school's Core Values and beliefs and revised 21st Century Learning Expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school. They have begun to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in a majority of classrooms, and help to guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations. Though recent revision has refined the language describing these ideals, SHS has long been committed to them conceptually. As a result, the challenge will be to solidify the connection between the already existing culture and the new language being used to describe it. This work will be based on research and multiple data sources, as well as district and community priorities.

Recent personnel changes and budget concerns at the district level have hampered efforts to begin such an undertaking. However, with those issues

now resolved, the school committee is invested and engaged in the creation of a strategic plan for timely review and revision of these documents.

Based on the Rating Guide for the Standard, Sample High School judges its adherence to the Standard as ACCEPTABLE.

Strengths:

- The dynamic and inclusive process of revisiting the Core Values and Beliefs involved all necessary and appropriate constituencies in decision making
- Institutions such as State of the School Day, Winter Carnival, Advisory, SRB, the Leadership team and school spirit initiatives demonstrate that the Core Values and beliefs are already deeply ingrained in the school culture
- Integration of the "Three Cs" through numerous outlets and means speaks to a thorough commitment to embedding the language of the newly developed Core Values
- Development of strong school-wide analytic rubrics using inclusive and research-based means enables the school community to measure progress toward meeting the 21st Century Learning Expectations
- The school community has made deliberate connections regarding the foundational relationship between the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations
- Clear prioritization of resource allocations ensure that the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations are reflected in the culture of the school

Needs:

- Continue communicating the new language of the Core Values to students, parents and the community
- Complete and approve the remaining school-wide analytic rubrics and continue implementation in every classroom
- Bring all learning areas to equal footing with regard to ongoing curriculum documentation and revision to ensure that each is driven by the Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations
- Develop a plan for the timely and regular review of Core Values, beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations
- Support and engage in the school committee's strategic plan which will articulate a district-wide set of Core Values and connect SHS with all other schools