

Re-Conceptualizing Connecticut's High Schools: A Blueprint for Continuous Change

Introduction

The attached monograph represents one part of a coordinated effort to re-think the high school program and all curriculum statutes that apply kindergarten through grade 12. In October 2000, we brought forward for the State Board's discussion various recommendations regarding the reform of the high school and graduation credits

In thinking about what actions to take to address the recommendations specifically related to the high school program and graduation course work requirements, there are a number of factors to consider.

First, the original report presented to the Board in October 2000 prior to reaction from the field called for a realignment of requirements consistent with the areas delineated in the Common Core of Learning (CCL). Further, it called for the establishment of a structure within the high school that would allow students to accept increasing responsibility for their studies by offering them a broader range of choices and the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and earn "credit equivalents" for such demonstration.

After the Board received and discussed the original committee's report, it was disseminated widely for reaction. Subsequently, a larger committee was formed. In addition, several important events -- including new state legislation and a recent national report -- took place while the committee was meeting.

This draft report represents the best current "Connecticut" thinking and discussion about the programmatic aspects of a re-conceptualized high school. Please use it to inform your thinking about your high school program. We expect that after much review and comment the State Board of Education will receive and discuss its contents in the Fall of 2002.

Re-Conceptualizing Connecticut's High Schools: A Blueprint for Continuous Change

The time has come for dramatic change in our high schools that ensures a more challenging, engaging and supportive experience for each high school youngster in Connecticut.

- *Our high schools must provide more, and more rigorous choices for our students from the moment they enter the high school up to and including their senior year.*
- *Our high schools must provide a safe, positive environment that supports students' growth and development, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally and physically.*

Introduction

Over the past two decades, Connecticut's schools have been recognized for their leadership in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Relative to other states, our students perform at very high levels – first in the nation in reading and mathematics in the 4th grade, for example – and our teachers are among the most highly trained and assessed in the nation.

Despite the accolades – perhaps even as a result of them – Connecticut's educational community does not stand on its laurels and acknowledges the need for continuous improvement in the service of increased student achievement in both the academic and social realms.

While there have been dramatic changes in curriculum and instruction at the elementary and middle school levels and incremental changes at the high school, generally the high school has been slower to embrace a fundamental change in its vision of education for all students and in its structure and delivery of curriculum and instruction to reflect that vision.

The Groundwork is There

1. State Assessment: The Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

Since 1994, all tenth grade students have been required to take the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). This test was designed to assess important and challenging skills and competencies in discrete subjects – mathematics and science – and in interdisciplinary areas – reading and writing across various content areas. Testing in the Spring of 2001 represents the first year of the second generation CAPT.

The nature of the assessment has caused many districts to modify the content of their curriculum and the mode of instruction. For example, laboratory work has become an integral part of the science curriculum as a result of its inclusion on the CAPT. Further, the interdisciplinary nature of the assessment in reading and writing across the content areas has stimulated English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies teachers to construct interdisciplinary experiences for students.

2. State Legislation: Local Graduation Competency Requirements

In the 2001 session of the General Assembly legislation was passed requiring school districts by September 2002 to “specify the basic skills necessary for graduation for classes graduating in 2006, and for each graduating class thereafter, and include a process to assess a student’s level of competency in such skills.” For each basic skill area identified by the local board of education, districts will then have to specify a competency and how they will assess that a student can demonstrate it at a particular level of expertise. For those students who are not able to demonstrate the required level of

competence, the district will have to provide assistance to help the student gain the competency necessary for graduation.

This requirement should result in fruitful discussions about what the community believes is important for students to know and be able to do (i.e., what basic skills are required) as a result of their high school experience. Educators will thoughtfully determine what performances and at what level of performance students will be required to demonstrate in order to graduate. Educators will have to identify multiple ways that a student may demonstrate the expected level of competence including, but not limited to, an expected level of performance on the CAPT.

3. Regional Accreditation Requirements

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) has issued a new set of Standards for Accreditation effective for schools hosting visiting committees beginning in the year 2000. The Teaching and Learning Standards require high schools going through the accreditation process to address 7 standards in the areas of Mission and Expectations for Student Learning, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment of Student Learning.

These standards are consistent with the requirements of Connecticut's recently passed legislation regarding local graduation competency requirements. In fact, the New England standards require for *all* areas of curriculum what the Connecticut legislation requires for just "basic skills." Examples from the standards follow:

Mission and Expectations for Students Learning

The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve. The expectations for student learning are based on and drawn from the school's mission statement. These expectations are the fundamental goals by which the school continually assesses the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Every component of the school community must focus on enabling all students to achieve the schools' expectation for student learning.

The school shall have established expectations for student learning that:

- Reflect the school's mission statement;
- Identify high expectations for all students in academic, civic, and social areas;
- Specifically state what all students should know and be able to do by the time
- They graduate from the school taking into account the skills, competencies, concepts and understandings identified by district, state, and national standards and by professional organizations.

Curriculum

The curriculum, which includes coursework, co curricular activities and other educational experiences as described in the program of studies, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links what the school believes and expects students to learn to its instructional practices....

Written curriculum documents shall be aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and shall guide content, instruction, and assessment.

Instruction

The quality of instruction in a school is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning and is the link between curriculum, learning expectations, and student performance.

Instructional practice must be grounded in the school's mission and expectations for student learning, supported by research in best practice, and refined and improved based on identified student needs.

Instructional strategies shall include practices that personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active self-directed learners, involve all students in higher order thinking

to promote depth of understanding, and provide opportunities to demonstrate the application of knowledge or learning.

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to inform students regarding their learning progress and teachers regarding ways to adjust their instruction to better respond to the learning needs of students. Further, it communicates the growth and competence of students to parents, school officials, and the public....

The administration and faculty shall use agreed upon levels of performance, indicators of successful accomplishment and other data to assess the progress of students in achieving the school's stated academic expectations for student learning and regularly report the findings to the public.

In short, in order for Connecticut's high schools to meet the rigorous standards set forth by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, most of our high schools will have to conduct a serious, in-depth review and make fundamental changes in structure and practice.

4. National Reports on the High School

The need for educational reform in the high school has been recognized at the national level for quite some time. Books like *The Paideia Proposal* by Mortimer Adler and *Horace' Compromise* by TheodoreSizer appeared in the early 1980s and resulted in a multitude of books, proposals and commission reports calling for radical change in the high school. One of the most influential reports used extensively by high school principals in their work to effect change was *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, published in 1996 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals

Most recently, a 29-member National Commission on the High School Senior Year, a group formed last June by departing Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, issued preliminary findings in January 2001 that "sketch a broad view of high schools as institutions stuck in a time warp." The panel found that "most students, even the best, typically waste the senior year of high school by taking 'gut' classes, ditching school, cutting corners on homework, or working long hours at after-school jobs." According to the Report as reported in the Education Week, Volume XX, Number 19, January 24, 2001:

One way to address the senior-year problem may be to make the time requirements or the structure of high schools more flexible . . . Growing numbers of 'middle college high schools' allow students who have completed all their course requirements by age 16 to finish high school on a college campus...

The Final Report of the National Commission on the High School Senior Year was just released in October 2001. In the Report entitled, *Raising Our Sights: No High School Senior Left Behind*, the Commission:

...refines the findings from the last report into a strategy the Commission calls the "The Triple-A Program" – improve **alignment**, raise **achievement**, and provide more (and more rigorous) **alternatives**... While a high school education was sufficient for the demands faced by earlier generations, children of the 21st century will need at least two years of postsecondary education. (Pp. 4-5)

Among the major findings and recommendations of the Commission are:

State and local educators should reshape the senior year to provide more learning opportunities of all kinds. They should develop sound alternative paths (Advanced Placement, dual enrollment in secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, rigorous structured work experiences, and community service) to provide credit toward graduation for high school students and ease their transition from high school to postsecondary education and the world of work. They should:

- Greatly expand the opportunity for high school students to experience the challenges of college-level work...
- Provide options for service-and work-based learning opportunities for credit...
- Experiment with efforts to create “virtual high schools” that employ distance-learning techniques...
- Require all seniors to showcase an accumulated portfolio of their work throughout high school, including a senior project demonstrating their capabilities for research, creative thinking, rigorous analysis, and clear written and oral communication...
- Investigate alternative ways to use and schedule time, including block schedules, to provide the flexibility needed to explore complex subjects in depth and complete rigorous projects. (Pp.32-33)

In advancing this work, particularly at the middle and secondary levels, consciously aim to provide all students with strong connections to adults (in and out of school) who can help them explore options for school, post-secondary education, and work.

- State and local education agencies should provide the resources needed to realign the roles and reduce the caseloads of school counselors. Counselors will need time to... act as mentors to individual students...
- State education agencies should work with local education agencies and leaders in the philanthropic community to emphasize the need for an adult advocate for every child in every school. This effort deserves the same intensity of state support as standards-based reform has received...
- Local community-based organizations of all kinds...should actively seek out opportunities to mentor students through the middle and high school years...
- Local associations of employers also should be advocates, encouraging their employer-members to find ways to free up employees’ time to work as mentors in local schools...(pp.33-34)

In yet another report on the high school—this one issued in January 2001 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York—entitled, *Creating a New Vision of the Urban High School*, the report called for, as the title states, the creation of a new vision of a high school redesigned to become a community that provides “a high level of academic rigor for all youngsters so that they will be prepared to pursue postsecondary education.” The report goes on to cite promising approaches such as creating small schools, reaching out to parents and other community members to “demonstrate to students that caring adults want to help them achieve at a high level,” and partnering with businesses and universities to provide one-day-a-week field internships in museums, libraries or other local institutions. The report concludes:

An expedient solution will not solve the core problem of high school obsolescence. The aim must be to transform, not merely tweak, the design of the high school. In the words of Vartan Gregorian, ‘The traditional structures and formal systems for providing young people an education are often outmoded by the measure of today’s and certainly tomorrow’s needs. Education’s bureaucratized structure inherited from another age must be modernized to fit the new circumstances.’ (*Carnegie Challenge 2001, Creating a New Vision of the Urban High School*, p.8).

The Connecticut Solution

What the Re-Conceptualized Connecticut High Schools Looks Like

Before defining the components of Connecticut's Re-conceptualized High School, the committee established a mission statement for such a high school as follows:

The Re-Conceptualized Connecticut High School is a community of learners that appreciates and supports each individual's background and needs and expects each of its members to master the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to contribute to society as a caring and responsible citizen.

Once a mission that established a vision was set, they began to discuss in detail what elements were needed to reach such a vision. They decided that the areas of School Culture/Climate, Curriculum, Instruction, Professional Development, Assessment and Organizational Leadership were all components, many of them already specified in the NEASC standards, that needed to be addressed in order to reach their vision. The following table summarizes the essential aspects of each component:

The Re-Conceptualized High School is one in which:	
School Culture / Organizational Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a strong sense of community that is supportive of each individual. ▪ Students take increasing responsibility – both academically and socially. ▪ Each student is connected to a significant adult (so that no child goes unnoticed). ▪ Support systems for students include mentoring programs, community outreach, etc. ▪ Teachers have time to plan, assess, and communicate with parents, students and other significant adults and may be part of interdisciplinary teams.
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a clear expectation for students of the knowledge, skills and competencies they must demonstrate including how they will be assessed. ▪ There is a balance of emphasis that includes key concepts, ideas or essential understandings, as well as topical information. ▪ Each student has increasingly greater opportunity to choose among and within areas of study. ▪ Faculties work together to build connections between and among content areas (interdisciplinary curriculum and instruction).
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers have strong knowledge of content, a repertoire of instructional strategies, knowledge about students, and attitudes that support high levels of learning for all students. ▪ Reflection and analysis of teaching and learning is an integral part of instruction. ▪ There are mentors to coach and serve as confidants to beginning teachers. ▪ There is a balance between whole class, teacher-directed activities and experiential, hands-on, student-directed learning. ▪ The teacher plays the role of coach and mentor rather than the giver of information. ▪ Emphasis is on in-depth study of a few topics with higher order thinking, rather than breadth. ▪ Instruction in certain subject areas is not “over-tracked.”
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time for professional development is an integral part of each teacher’s schedule. ▪ Teachers examine and share regularly student work and progress over time. ▪ Teachers are intellectuals engaged in constantly collecting information from student work so they may re-design learning strategies and extend their repertoires. ▪ Teachers extend continually their knowledge about students and new ways of teaching, maintaining a familiarity with theory and research.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment forms the foundation of quality instructional decision-making. ▪ Standards, expectations, and assessment results are clear to students, parents and the community. ▪ Assessments are designed so that they enable students to self-monitor growth and determine what they need to know and be able to do to be successful. ▪ Assessment links to the design of subsequent learning activities. ▪ Assessments not only measure what students recognize and remember but also how well they apply information in a meaningful, authentic context.
Organizational Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every member of the school community functions as a leader charged with supporting the mission and vision of the school. ▪ Instructional supervision begins with and is supported by the principal’s leadership and support for high standards and performance-based expectations, in a humane environment. ▪ Teachers share the responsibility for inspiring, coaching and helping one another to continue to grow. ▪ Administrators, teachers and students are challenged to continue to grow and develop. ▪ School leaders are adept at facilitating the work of others. ▪ Parents and guardians support students’ increasing responsibility for themselves. ▪ The community is aware of and supports the school’s vision.

Recommendations for State Action

A. Our high schools must provide more, and more rigorous choices for our students from the moment they enter the high school up to and including their senior year. To accomplish this we recommend that the state and local districts:

1. Allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills throughout their high school experience and offer them “credit equivalents” for such demonstration. The knowledge and skill expectations should be clearly articulated and derived from the Common Core of Learning (CCL) issued by the State Board of Education in 1998 (to be revised in 2003-2204).

Most of the actions required to achieve the vision of the re-conceptualized high school reside at the local level. However, the current High School graduation requirements as specified in C.G.S 10-221a (Appendix E) are not conducive to achieving a number of elements of the re-conceptualized high school.

If we want to foster interdisciplinary study, if we want to foster the establishment of clear expectations and standards for what students must know and be able to do, if we want each student to have increasingly greater opportunity to choose among and within areas of study, then to state high school graduation requirements solely based on the amount of time spent studying in specific subject areas as the current statute does, is undermining those goals.

Instead, the state statute should be amended to incorporate graduation requirements that include student demonstration of meeting standards by requiring each local and regional school board to adopt a policy and procedures for granting credit equivalents. The expectations should be derived from *all* the areas defined in the Common Core of Learning (CCL) issued by the State Board of Education in 1998. The Common Core should be used as the description of the foundational knowledge and skills that students must develop and demonstrate to graduate. This proposal would complement the recent legislation requiring only “basic skills” be demonstrated for graduation and is the logical next step to it. Further, it would be consistent with the requirements of the new standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Moreover, the definition of credits based on time spent in classroom instruction (40 minutes x 180 days), should be modified to include “credit equivalents” which would allow the student to demonstrate his/her competency and receive credit for such demonstration. These credit equivalents would allow the student to do something other than taking a course for a specified number of hours in order to show that he/she has the competencies expected of someone who took the course for the specified time. By allowing each local/regional school board to establish a policy and procedure for granting “credit equivalents” there would be the necessary flexibility and local determination – based on individual student requests.

The concept of “equivalents” suggests that there would be no single way to achieve the standards. Rather, a quality high school, grounded in the vision of the Reconceptualized Connecticut High School, would design programs and processes that ensure that students have achieved the key skills not only through time in class. The acquisition of “credit equivalents” would require rigorous, sustained commitment and could include, but not be limited to, one or more of the following:

- Meeting district performance standards as assessed by locally designed assessments or portfolio of student-designed projects, products and/or performances;

- Successful completion of an accredited college or university course that assures mastery of program goals and content standards as defined in the CCL;
- Achieving a standard of performance determined by the local school district on a standardized assessment measure such as the CAPT, SAT II, SAT verbal for English Language Arts, SAT I Math for Mathematics, and/or the Advanced Placement (AP) Examination in appropriate subject areas;
- Meeting a standard of performance determined by the local school district on in-depth experiences such as independent study, internship, and/or community service in the field;
- Alternative coursework at accredited colleges and universities through the Internet;
- Virtual high school through the Internet.

These “equivalents” would allow students to receive credit for mastery of content without necessarily spending a particular number of hours in a class. The “equivalents,” once awarded by a district, are just that – equivalent to regular credits – and therefore transferable from school district to school district as credits currently are accepted.

The acquisition of credit equivalents would free up the student’s schedule to allow the student further choice to pursue areas he/she might not otherwise have had the time to explore. For example, a student who earned a full 3-credit equivalent in mathematics, might choose to pursue other subject areas such as art or music he/she might not have otherwise had the time to study. Or, he/she might choose to continue to earn additional mathematics credits through Internet based course work or at a local college or university and therefore graduate with more than 3 credits in math. Or, he/she might choose to graduate “early” if he/she had amassed enough credits in mathematics and other areas to do so. Local school district policy would dictate which, if any or all, of these options would be available to the student. In addition, local school district policy would dictate grading policies as they relate to the awarding of credit equivalents and class rank (if the district still issues class rank).

2. Require an integrative, culminating, self-directed learning experience (which may be in the form of independent study/work experience/project/community service or other appropriate activity) that is researched, conducted and reported on or demonstrated under the supervision of an appropriate adult as part of the high school graduation requirement. Local school boards would be given two years to adopt policies and procedures to add this requirement to their new “competencies required for graduation” beginning with the class of 2009.

There has been a great deal written on the usefulness of allowing students to take responsibility for their own learning by pursuing their own interests and being actively involved in the conceptualization, development and reporting about them. Such work, conducted primarily in the senior year, should serve as an integrative, culminating experience, helping students see the connections between what they have studied in high school to real world issues and problems. Moreover, it allows students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to research, create, analyze and communicate clearly in written and oral form. Credit for such an independent experience could be awarded in a particular subject area discipline or as a credit equivalent in areas not regularly offered as part of the high school curriculum. The experience should require no less than a semester’s worth of time, and could be conducted over the course of a full year (not necessarily in the senior year alone).

Numerous national reports have called for requiring a senior year project. The most recent recommendation in this regard comes from the Final Report of the National Commission on the High School Senior Year cited earlier in this paper.

One school district in our state, Region #12, has since 1995, required a Senior Year Project as part of their local high school graduation requirement. As Eugene Horrigan, Principal of Shepaug Valley High School states, “this is the AP course for life.” Students get involved in significant projects shepherded by the help and assistance of at least two adults who serve as the “project teacher” and the “technical advisor.” Students, with the assistance of these adults, are required to identify a thesis, topic, issue or problem to be addressed and determine the major focus question and subsequent essential questions to be answered by their investigation and /or research. They much actually conduct their research/lab/field work and keep accurate accountings of their experiences. They are required to make a public presentation in whatever form is appropriate to demonstrate what they know and are able to do as a result of the work.

3. Require local school boards to regularly review their curriculum offerings to ensure that:

- **the courses currently offered incorporate more rigorous instruction that stimulates students to study topics in-depth, and incorporate a balance between whole class, teacher-directed activities, and experiential, hands-on, student-directed learning.**
- **more courses that are interdisciplinary in nature and more courses that have clear connections with real world issues/ problems/questions/work are being offered and taken by students.**

Local school districts should regularly review their progress in implementing these two improvements by utilizing both the NEASC accreditation reviews and the data gathered on the annual Strategic School Profiles

“More rigorous and more relevant” has been the clarion call for decades. It is time that we rigorously review our offering at the high school level with this in mind and modify and/or add such courses. To stimulate such change in curriculum offerings, small competitive grants should be offered by the state to high schools to develop the curriculum and show how students will be encourage to enroll in greater numbers of such courses/experiences.

B. Our high schools must provide a safe, positive environment that supports students’ growth and development, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally and physically. To accomplish this we recommend that:

- 1. The state offer incentive grants to districts to review rigorously every aspect of their school culture/climate and make necessary changes to ensure that there is a strong sense of community that is supportive of each individual.**
- 2. Districts reorganize to ensure that there is at least one adult assigned to serve as mentor/advisor who offers advice and guidance regularly to a relatively small number of students.**

Teaching and learning is grounded in the environment in which it takes place. “School environment should be a catalyst for ensuring that students pursue their education under circumstances that foster the very difficult work of teaching and learning” (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996, p.17). It is a troubling time in the climate of the American High School. Horrific events have repeated themselves throughout the country, and have been averted right in Connecticut and in Massachusetts. While we try to support and connect with each student, clearly there are those who fall through the cracks in the high school as it is presently structured. Guidance departments, with at best 250 to 1 and at worst 500 to 1 ratios cannot possibly attend to the needs of each student.

There is a serious need for a high school climate and organizational structure that better attends to the emotional and social needs of ALL students. Students should no longer be able to get “lost” in high school, to lack significant interaction with adults, or to behave in ways that endanger other students. Each student needs to count on an adult as his/her advocate within the context of the school (Sternberg, 1999). High school must be a safe, positive environment that supports students’ growth and development, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally and physically. A healthy environment supports students’ academic development.

In order to provide this support, our schools must reorganize themselves to ensure that adults are regularly available to each and every student on an ongoing basis. Each adult in the school, should have the responsibility to oversee a relatively small number of students – and serve as a mentor/advocate for both academic and social/emotional issues that arise over the course of the student’s career at the high school. In addition, this adult would be the liaison between the school and the family thereby enhancing the school family connection.

C. Thoughts regarding changes in credit requirements as presently delineated in C.G.S. 10-221(a):

1. Legislation requiring the specification of basic skills for the class of 2006 be extended to specify all of the skills areas in the Common Core of Learning beginning with the class of 2010.

The committee has struggled to decide what actions to take to address recommendations specifically related to high school graduation course work requirements,. After much deliberation, we have come to the conclusion that the present credit requirements should stand as they are presently delineated in C.G.S. 10-221(a).

Instead, the committee wishes to focus on student demonstration of the knowledge and skills students need to know and be able to do as derived from the Common Core of Learning (as specified in the chart which follows). We recommend that as an extension to the recently passed requirement that local school districts identify *basic* skills for graduation for the class of 2006, that the skills be articulated for *all* the areas of the CCL and be incorporated into graduation requirements for the class of 2010 and beyond. This would be consistent with the requirements of NEASC and would allow districts ample time to incorporate this requirement into the program for all students.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL EXPECTATIONS BY CONTENT AREA DERIVED FROM THE COMMON CORE OF LEARNING

English Language Arts: The Connecticut high school graduate will demonstrate proficiency, confidence, and fluency in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing; the graduate will explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and historical periods.

Mathematics: The Connecticut high school graduate can apply a range of numerical, algebraic, geometric, and statistical concepts and skills to formulate, analyze and solve real world problems.

Science: The Connecticut high school graduate will demonstrate knowledge of the basic concepts of, and interrelationship among biology, chemistry, physics, earth (including ecology) and space sciences, and will be able to apply scientific skills, processes and methods of inquiry to the real world.

Social Studies: The Connecticut high school graduate will demonstrate a knowledge of history, civics and government, geography and economics, the social sciences, and humanities including one year of U.S. history and one half year in civics/government.

World Languages and Cultures: The Connecticut high school graduate will demonstrate foundational knowledge and appreciation of the language and culture of one language other than English.

The Arts: The Connecticut high school graduate will create, perform and respond with understanding in at least one of the fine and performing art forms, and appreciate the importance of the arts in expressing human experience.

Technology Education: The Connecticut high school graduate show knowledge about the nature, power, influence and effects of technology and be able to design and develop products, systems and environments to solve problems.

Applied Education: The Connecticut high school graduate will experience school-to-career transition by demonstrating specific knowledge of or experience with one of the eight career clusters: arts and media; business and finance; construction technologies and design; environmental, natural resources and agriculture; government; education and human services; health and bio-sciences; retail, tourism, recreation and entrepreneurial; and technologies: manufacturing, communications and repair, and prepare for adult life and lifelong learning including understanding and preparing for parenting, family and child care responsibilities.

Health, Wellness and Physical Fitness: The Connecticut high school graduate will understand and develop behaviors that promote life-long health and wellness, and will recognize the importance of and participate in physical activities and learning designed to maintain and enhance healthy life styles. *

Learning Resources and Information Technology: The Connecticut high school graduate will be a competent user of information and technology and be able to apply related strategies to acquire basic skills and content knowledge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the time has come for us to examine the high school experience we offer to all of our students seriously and critically. While many Connecticut high schools have made incremental changes which have resulted in a more challenging curriculum for their students and in a more supportive school climate, the changes have not been widely implemented in Connecticut high schools or permeated every facet of the high school experience for each student.

It is hoped that the vision of a Re-Conceptualized High School including the components of Culture/Organizational Climate, Curriculum, Instruction, Professional Development, Assessment and Organizational Leadership that are part of that vision, will serve to stimulate discussion and action at the local school district level. Many of the recommendations can be implemented at the local school level without the need for direct involvement by the State.

The proposed change in C.G.S. 10-221 which would incorporate a “credit equivalent” concept and a senior year project is meant to be but one avenue that the State can influence and assist districts in providing a more rigorous, flexible and ultimately meaningful program of study for each student in Connecticut.

The time has come for dramatic change in our high schools that ensures a more challenging, engaging and supportive experience for each high school youngster in Connecticut.

- ***Our high schools must provide more, and more rigorous choices for our students from the moment they enter the high school up to and including their senior year.***
- ***Our high schools must provide a safe, positive environment that supports students' growth and development, not only academically, but also socially, emotionally and physically.***

We believe that the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report will do just that.

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