

## NARRATIVE

**The Bristol Central High School community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.**

Bristol Central High School distributes Student/Parent Handbooks every year and has recently gone to an on-line version to curb costs of printing. Students who do not have access to the internet at home may utilize the school computers and the guidance department provides a hard copy if necessary. If a parent doesn't have internet access they are permitted to come to school and utilize the family resource room that has internet access. The Student/Parent Handbook is reviewed and updated yearly by administrators and selected staff.

The Student/Parent Handbook provides students and parents with all school policies including, but not limited to, the school mission statement, school calendars, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, attendance policies and discipline policies.

Bristol Central has numerous programs which foster a positive school culture. RAM STRONG Awards recognize students exemplifying the school's motto: Be Creative; Be Conscientious; Be Collaborative; Be Committed. The Giving Society is a program where kids compliment each other anonymously. The Unified Activities Partner Program pair special needs students with regular education students for extracurricular activities. The Service Learning Experience allows students to assist teachers during class and prep periods.

Programs that allow student ownership include, but are not limited to, the student government, the BCHS Student Think Tank, and Governance Committee. The Governance Committee meets once a month and includes teachers, students, parents and administrators. During the meetings each member is encouraged to bring issues and concerns to the table for discussion. The Student Think Tank consists of students nominated by their teachers to brainstorm ideas to continue to improve their experiences at Bristol Central. Several ideas have been implemented. The students who are asked are not the students, who are already involved in many activities, but those who could benefit from this opportunity to make connections. Approximately 100 students

participate, with new nominations being accepted each year. The Think Tank meets monthly with the Principal, Assistant Principal and other faculty members.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through access to their current grades via Powerschool including parental involvement through use of the Parent Portal. In addition, students develop individualized planning for their academic, career and social-emotional well-being by using the Naviance/Family Connections program. Students work with their guidance counselors, advisors and other faculty members to help achieve their goals.

The school utilized the Endicott Research Center's Self Study Survey to gain an in-depth perspective on the school climate from student and staff points of view. According to the survey, 70% of students agree with the statement, "I am proud of my school." Moreover, 86% of parents agree that the school provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive school culture.

**Bristol Central High School is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).**

Bristol Central High School is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity. All students at Bristol Central High School are required to enroll and complete Civics, which is heterogeneously grouped. In addition, physical education and wellness are heterogeneously grouped graduation requirements. Many students take elective courses, all of which are heterogeneously grouped. Furthermore, all students have access to enroll in Honors or AP courses. The number of AP offerings, as well as the number of students enrolled in AP courses, has increased substantially over the past few years.

All students have equal access to the curriculum and are expected to achieve the school-wide learning expectations. Service Learning positions, which involve assisting teachers, are available to all students. Students with learning disabilities have the assistance of support staff, study skills classes and special educators to meet these expectations.

As part of Central's academic, co-curricular, and school-wide initiatives, students are encouraged to explore multicultural perspectives, to show respect for others, and to demonstrate tolerance. The World Language Department has organized exchange programs with Spain, France, and

Italy as an extension of the classroom. In addition, the World Language Department also sponsors a multicultural night which is well attended by students, families, and staff.

The school community is built on expectations of tolerance. A school-wide presentation by Chris Herren taught students the importance of accepting differences and respecting others. The school sponsors inclusive clubs such as the Gay-Straight Alliance and The GX (computer and video game) Club. Bristol Central students also actively participate in Unified Sports and Unified Theater programs. Through the various courses and programs, Bristol Central provides an inclusive environment.

**There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who know the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.**

All students and staff at Bristol Central High School participate in a school-wide Advisory Program. The stated goal of the Advisor/Advisee program is to “enable students to develop a bond with an adult in the community with whom they can share goals, discuss concerns and find support during their high school experience. The program will also provide students with the opportunity to develop a common culture in the school that values success, self-respect, self-discipline and the following habits of mind: creativity, collaboration, commitment and conscientiousness.”

Students are randomly assigned to advisory groups when they enter freshman year. Advisory groups consist of an average of twelve students, all of the same grade level, and one adult. Students remain in the group for all four years, allowing for the development of a strong bond between the students in the group and the adult. Advisory groups meet once every two weeks for a twenty-five minute period. Grade level themes help to create some focus and consistency in the topics a group discusses. The themes are as follows: grade 9 - transition, grade 10 - goal setting, grade 11 - post secondary planning and grade 12 - community/global citizenship. At times issues are addressed school-wide, in addition to the grade level topics. Based on a student survey given in Advisory, the overall theme for the 2014-2015 school year is “respect.” Throughout all activities, Advisory is a “place” where students and the facilitating adult come together to discuss issues of importance to the students and to the school community. The Advisory group

serves to give the students a connection to an adult and to a group of students that remains constant throughout their four years at Bristol Central.

Outside of the formal Advisory program, many teachers take on advisory roles as coaches, class and club advisors.

**In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:**

- engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning.
- use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practice.
- dedicate formal time to implement professional development.
- apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Bristol Central High School incorporates both formal and informal sessions geared towards promoting professional dialogue among staff members. Formal sessions include professional development sessions which begin the school year (the first 3 days prior to students' arrival at school). During this time, the tone is set for the year and accomplishments and areas for improvement from the past year are reviewed. This first formal professional development is followed up by a session in November, where teachers reflect upon the year, as it has started, and continue to discuss and plan for what is left to come.

Every Wednesday afternoon students are dismissed at 1:35 to allow professional development and collaboration among teachers. Included are: faculty meetings (once monthly), followed by department meetings with clear guidelines that funnel the reflection and analysis process. Faculty meetings are complemented by Data Team meetings, which allow departments and individual teachers to analyze student data and create common assessments and lessons to further student achievement. The collaboration allows teachers to communicate ideas and to expand their repertoire of knowledge and effective teaching tools.

Teachers continuously use resources outside of school to maintain currency with best practices. On-line journals, for example, form a source of professional development for staff, as they provide new and authentic ideas and work samples that teachers use in their daily instruction. Webinars are also commonly used as a cost effective means of providing teachers with ways of

improving their practice. The school district has a built in two day allowance for teachers to register and attend professional development conferences of their choice with available funding. The district has also been flexible in refunding if teachers take advantage of **more** than the stated two. With the implementation of new curricula throughout the school and the overall school system, teachers are oftentimes collaborating district-wide to create and implement new curricula and assessments. All departments have implemented the Google Drive platform to share resources across the district. With a supportive Office of Teaching and Learning, many content areas have been allotted paid time to create useful and authentic materials. Outside of the school, teachers often organize enrichment activities for students geared toward authenticating classroom experiences. Students travel to Canada and Europe on field trips through language classes that provide both the teachers and the students with an ability to interact with culture which has been taught in class.

**School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.**

All district high school administrators are trained in Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED.) SEED is aligned to Connecticut's Guidelines for Education Evaluation which were adopted by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC.) The administrators attended a 5-day SEED training workshop (SEED Administrative Training.)

To improve student learning, the administration attends full council meetings and high school meetings. The "Calibration meetings" are meant to ensure all administrators in the district are on the same page with current issues.

All teachers are on a three-year evaluation cycle. The evaluations are managed through Bloomboard. This year, the evaluation cycle was revised to include three formal observations in year one of the cycle and three informal observations in years two and three. Non-tenured teachers remain on year one of the cycle until they are tenured. The administrators also conduct brief, unannounced "walk-throughs" of all classes. Following all visits, the administrator provides the teacher with formal written feedback. These brief visits help the administrators get a feel for the effectiveness of the teachers in his/her building and allow for immediate changes to occur when necessary.

Bristol Central administrators spend a great deal of time with new teachers, conducting regular meetings to help them develop the skills necessary to run an effective and efficient classroom. The new teacher meetings are led by administrators and mentor teachers.

**The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.**

The master schedule supports the school's core values and beliefs about student learning.

The master schedule is reviewed annually during scheduling time to consistently promote student engagement, in-depth exploration of topics, and cross-curricular learning.

The school's daily schedule follows what is known as an alternating block: Two days in the cycle (A and B), each with 4-84 minute periods. The schedule gives opportunity for promotion of student engagement through in-depth exploration of topics, collaborative learning or inquiry-based instruction. The block also allows foundations courses for math and English students who struggle. Variations in the schedule occur as follows: (1) Wednesdays have 25 minutes less class time to afford the faculty 100 minutes for collaborative meetings in which student data is reviewed in order to guide instruction, and (2) Every other Thursday the schedule includes a 25 minute advisory period in which teachers and students are encouraged to foster mentoring relationships.

Because of the longer class periods, block scheduling allows for the implementation of collaborative learning practices and inquiry-based instruction. Students and teachers are not rushed to complete tasks; there is adequate time for thoughtful learning and reflection.

**Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.**

Maximum class size varies by department. For science, class size is set at 24 students due to laboratory occupancy restrictions. However, English, world language, social studies, and math classes are set at 25 students. At Bristol Central, the average number of students per section is 15.5, well under the set maximum. As a result, teachers are able to meet the learning needs of each student.

**The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.**

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Bristol Central has a principal and two assistant principals. The Administration communicates frequently with the Board of Education, faculty, and parents. Supervisory responsibilities, instructional leadership and program coordination are shared among the administrators. In addition to the administrators, each academic department has a Department Chair who serves as a liaison between the administration and the faculty to streamline communication, particularly regarding curriculum matters. Within departments, grade level data teams exist. Data teams are responsible for implementing curriculum, creating assessments, and reviewing data in order to maximize student achievement. Freshman teams also exist, allowing freshman teachers to work as a team with a common core of students. Freshman teams are made up of one faculty member from each core content area, at least one guidance counselor, and supporting special education teachers. Each team has a common group of students, thus ensuring that all students have multiple faculty members in common. Freshman teams have a common conference team planning period every other day. Freshman team leaders work closely with administration to address issues that arise as freshmen make the transition to high school. The administration and faculty work closely to maintain a relevant, challenging curriculum and to develop and share exemplary instruction. Building leaders understand instruction goes hand in hand with a positive and caring school environment. For example, last year the administration recruited Chris Herren to speak in a school-wide assembly in an effort to reinforce the school's core values. Chris presented a powerful message about the need for adolescents to accept themselves and each other. Chris' well received message was discussed in Advisory.

Communication is also important with the school community. The administration communicates in a variety of ways, including social media, The BC Link Newsletter, and the automated phone calling system. Faculty, parents and students are also invited to attend monthly governance meetings which address issues related to instructional improvement and the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations.

According to the Endicott College Survey, 90% of students agree or strongly agree that the principal is clear about what he wants the school to accomplish for all of the students. 94% of the

staff agree or strongly agree that the principal and administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

**Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.**

Bristol Central High School is a community where students and staff feel proud, safe, and supported by one another. Students, staff, and parents are encouraged to take an active role by participating in a variety of activities promoting school and self-pride. Teachers, students, and parents are encouraged to become involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making promoting responsibility and ownership. The concept of parents and students as partners in education is vital so members of the school community take ownership and pride in BCHS. The most recent self-study results indicate that 53% of students and 55% of parents feel they have input and opportunities to be involved in important decisions made at BCHS, while 62% of staff members believe teachers, students, and parents are meaningfully involved in decision-making to promote an atmosphere of responsibility and ownership.

Teachers participate in staff, department, and parent/teacher meetings. They have the opportunity to attend monthly Governance Committee meetings to make important decisions at BCHS. Teachers are generally receptive to decisions made by a group of peers. Students serve as members of the Governance Committee, Student Council, and the Athletic Leadership Council which all encourage student input in the decision-making process. The principal's "Think Tank," implemented in the spring of 2014, encourages students who have shown little involvement in school activities to share their ideas and become more involved in the decision-making process at BCHS. Parents have opportunities to attend parent/teacher conferences, school Governance Committee, and booster clubs. BCHS makes every effort to engage parents through the use of the automated phone system, the principal's Twitter account, the school's webpage, and BC Link. The Ram Strong award, given to students who exemplify the core values that BCHS embraces has been a positive way to recognize students who take pride and ownership of their school. As a result teachers, students, and parents are steadily becoming more involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.



**Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.**

Teachers at Bristol Central High School are passionate about improving the school environment and engaging students in the learning process. Teachers are actively involved in the process of reviewing and revising curriculum, assessment strategies and instructional practices. Teachers also take advantage of professional development opportunities outside of the school, in order to better serve the students. Teachers consistently look for opportunities to better the school by applying for various grants. Some of the leadership roles that the teachers take on within the school include: department chairs, ninth grade team leaders, club advisors, performing arts advisers and sports coaches. Teachers serve on the Safe School Climate Committee, which allows them to have a voice in decisions that are made to improve the overall climate and life of the school, a Crisis Management Team, SRBI Teams and PBIS. Bristol Central High School has a Strategic Research Based Intervention (SRBI) Team in place to assist students struggling either academically or behaviorally in any content area. There is a formal school-wide process for teachers to document the use of Tier 1 interventions and document student progress. There is an SRBI Review team that meets twice a month to review student progress and make recommendations moving forward. Bristol Central teachers also utilize PBIS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, to provide proactive and effective behavioral support for students. This is accomplished by establishing and maintaining clear and consistent behavioral expectations. Teachers examine student needs through data; develop school-wide expectations; teach school-wide expectations; reinforce school-wide expectations; discourage problem behaviors; and monitor implementation and progress. Teachers are also able to bring any questions or concerns to the Governance Council meetings which take place the first Monday of the month. Here, issues are presented and solutions are sought within the group and often brought back to the departments for discussion. Teachers are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to better the school environment, based solely on their desire to improve student learning.

**The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.**

The district's organization for administrative meetings consists of several layers. The first level is called the Principal and Administrative Council. Included on this council are all building principals and assistant principals, central office administrators, and the superintendent. This monthly meeting serves as the vehicle for district wide initiatives for the current school year and collaboration of major activities and benchmarks. The High School Council is made up of the administrators from both schools in order to align initiatives within the high schools. The Office of Teaching and Learning is included in the High School Council to assist the administrators with implementation of initiatives. The administrators communicate information to individual schools and to building wide data teams, which are made up of department coordinators. The department coordinators then deliver specific information to department data teams which consist of teachers.

**The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.**

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient building based autonomy. Hiring, budget appropriations and day to day procedures are examples of the decision-making responsibilities afforded the principal. According to the job description, some essential duties and responsibilities are the management of all building staff personnel, supervision of the daily use of the school facilities for both academic and non-academic purposes and initiation of programs to meet the specific needs of the school. Those duties and responsibilities are building based which further exemplifies the autonomy afforded the principal.

A change in the school's Accountability Plan (a Board of Education plan) was recently proposed by the principal to focus on one specific goal (literacy) instead of multiple goals. The change was approved by the Superintendent based on the principal's examination of the needs of Bristol Central High School. The structure and purpose of the data teams within this building are solely the principal's decision.

The Endicott Survey indicates 90% of the 979 student responses agreed with the statement, "My principal is clear about what he/she wants the school to accomplish for all of the students."

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Students, staff and administrators collaborate on a daily basis at Bristol Central High School to preserve a school culture that is familial, respectful and supportive. The school motto "Be Creative, Be Conscientious, Be Collaborative, Be Committed" is at the core of each and every daily endeavor at Bristol Central. The high academic standards, extracurricular opportunities, Advisory groups and many other in-school organizations provide students with multiple opportunities each year to be successful, leading to a high school experience that meets the unique needs of each student.

As part of a challenging and equitable curriculum, every student at Bristol Central takes at least one heterogeneous core class. The variety of additional heterogeneous required classes and electives allows all students the opportunity for a rich educational experience.

Advisory groups have helped to further develop the school culture. Advisory groups meet every two weeks for 25 minutes. The advisor and the group stay together for all four years of the group's high school experience. The goals of Advisory are to help make each grade level transition smooth and to provide an adult mentor for each student. The advisory program ensures that all students have at least one adult in the building to help them achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

The professional staff at Bristol Central has multiple opportunities for professional development to improve student learning. At the forefront are weekly Wednesday meetings which allow teachers to collaborate as an entire faculty, in departments, or in grade level data teams. Additional school and district professional development days occur several times a year.

The administration also participates in professional development, using research-based evaluation to improve student learning. Administrators have been trained in Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED). Administrators also visit classrooms frequently in order to provide feedback to teachers as part of improving student learning.

Bristol Central's alternating block schedule is conducive to student learning. Longer classes allow students to explore topics in depth and foster student engagement. The schedule

also provides time for teachers to collaborate in order to maximize the effectiveness of instruction.

Student load and class size is very manageable; the average class size is 15.5 students. As a result, teachers are able to meet the learning needs of all students.

Under the leadership of a strong, supportive principal, whose goal is to help improve teaching and learning, Bristol Central High School has a school culture that is safe, positive and respectful. The Administration, academic departments, and grade level data teams all work together to foster student learning. Multiple channels of communication exist between the school administration, staff, students, parents, and the community.

Bristol Central's values are clear to students, teachers and parents. Opportunities are available for all parties to have a role in decision making, promoting a positive sense of ownership in the school community.

Teachers at Bristol Central are passionate about improving the school environment and engaging students in the learning process. In addition to actively developing and revising curriculum, teachers coordinate numerous clubs and activities to increase student involvement in the school community. Bristol Central administration, teachers and staff make a concerted effort to celebrate student success in and out of the classroom through the “Ram Strong” program. This program is evidence that the entire staff contributes to the positive climate of the school.

The principal has the authority he needs to lead the school effectively. Reports from the Endicott Self-Study Survey indicate that 94% of the staff feels the principal and other school-based administration provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school’s core values, beliefs and learning expectations. A reported 98% of the staff believes the school provides a safe, positive, respectful and supportive school culture. These statistics are evidence that the administrative team at Bristol Central fosters a strong, safe, positive learning environment.

Based on the Committee on Public Secondary Schools Rating Guide for the Standard on School Culture and Leadership, Bristol Central High School is **EXEMPLARY**.

**STRENGTHS:**

- The strong instructional leadership conveyed by the principal and rooted in the school's core values and beliefs about learning
- A school culture characterized by a safe, positive, respectful and supportive climate that fosters student responsibility
- A school culture characterized by collaboration among adults
- An advisory program enabling students to develop a bond in the school community
- Opportunities for professional development
- Strong communication between administrators, faculty, parents, students and the community

**NEEDS:**

- Provide opportunities to increase the number of parents in meaningful decision-making
- Designate more time for teachers to collaborate with colleagues
- Provide coverage for teachers to observe exemplary instructional practices of peers.