



New England Association of
Schools and Colleges, Inc.

**Guidebook:
Developing and
Implementing Core Values,
Beliefs, and
Learning Expectations**

**Commission on Public Schools
Committee on Technical & Career Institutions
2015**

Purposes of this Guide

This guide is designed to assist schools and technical centers in meeting the 2015 Standard for Accreditation on Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations and to help schools and centers integrate and implement their core values, beliefs, and learning expectations into their application of the Teaching and Learning Standards.

The guide includes the following:

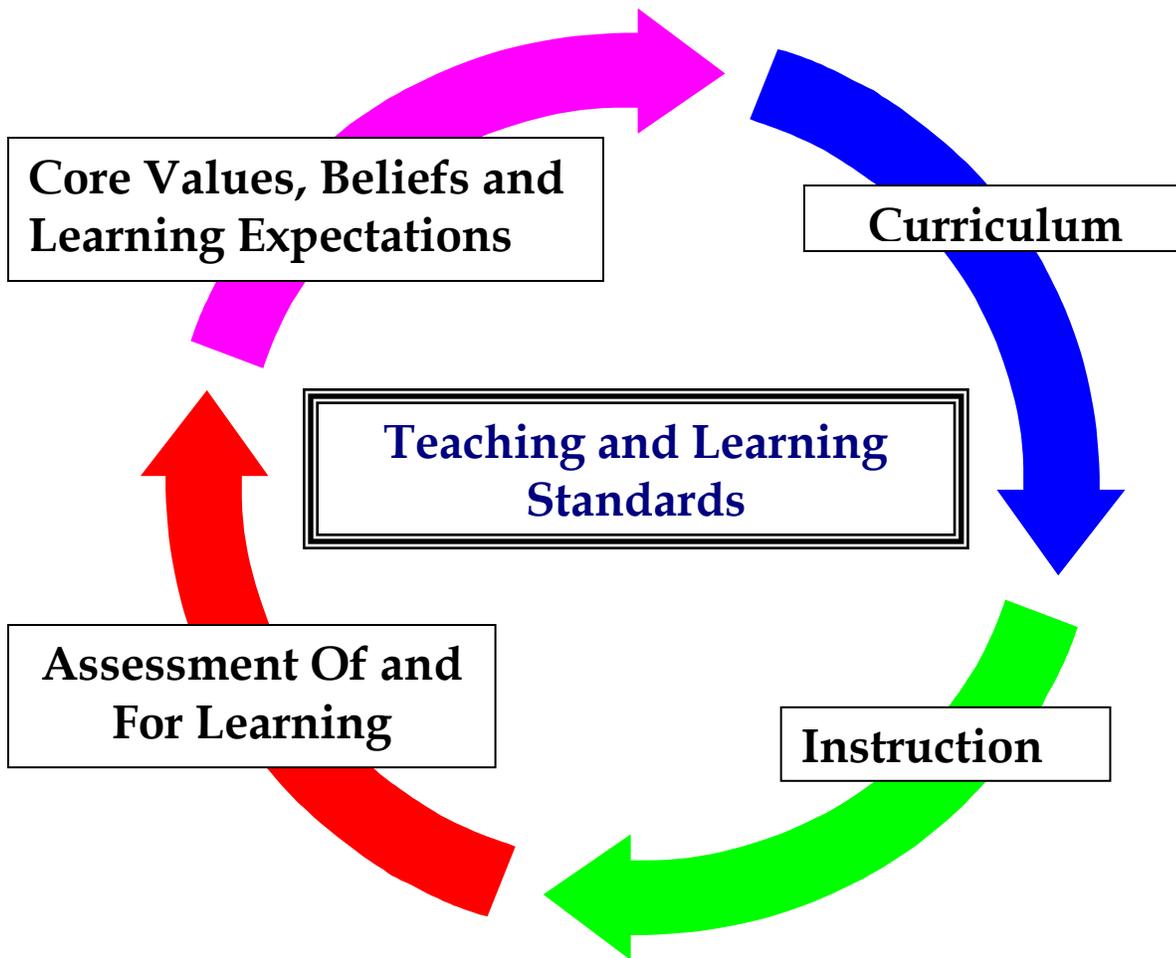
- a process to develop **core** values and beliefs about learning
- a process to develop academic & career, social, and civic learning expectations
- a process to develop and implement an assessment tool to evaluate students' achievement of the learning expectations
- integrating the core values, beliefs and learning expectations into the school's adherence to the Teaching and Learning Standards
- gathering local assessment data and reporting out data to students, their families and the school community

This guide should be especially useful to schools:

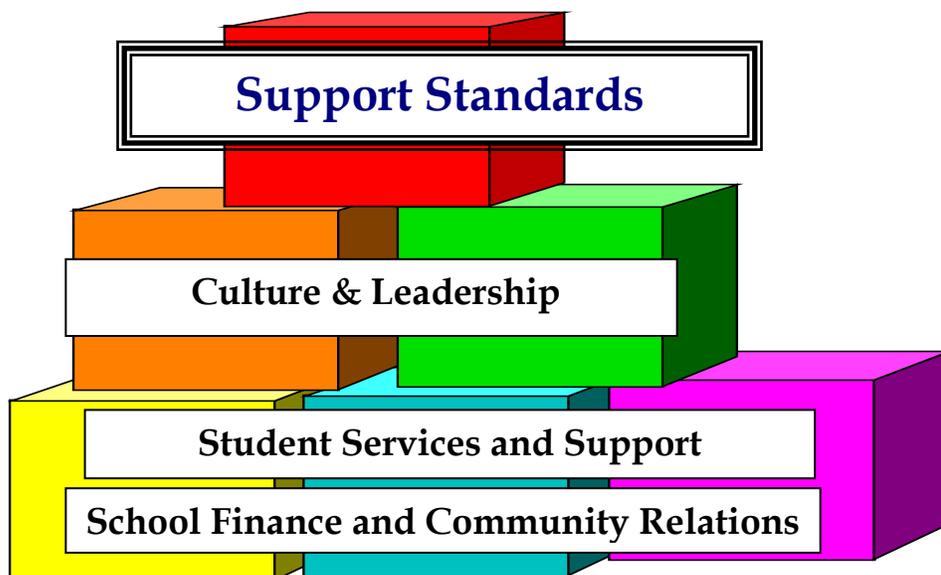
- who are about to create, review, and/or revise their core values, beliefs and learning expectations prior to beginning the self-study process
- who are just beginning to develop school-wide analytic rubrics
- who are just beginning to implement their faculty-developed school-wide assessment tool
- who are finding their student learning expectations to be difficult to assess
- who are finding it difficult to gather, report, and utilize local assessment data

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The Role of the School's Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
in Guiding Curriculum, Instruction,
and Assessment Of and For Student Learning



I. Developing Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

As member schools of the Committee on Technical & Career Institutions reflected on the changing landscape of education for the students of the 21st century and considered the most current educational research it became evident that schools/centers needed to move beyond a mission statement to establish clear foundational commitments to students and their communities. While as a first step mission statements described the essence of what the school/center community sought to achieve, they grew holistic and difficult to use in assessing the school's or center's achievement of the stated goals. Technical centers and schools may choose to continue to define their overall mission, but, in order to create an effective school culture that promotes improved learning for all students which can be effectively measured, a more defined statement is needed. Consequently, the 2015 Standards move centers and schools to further define their goals through *identifying a set of core values and beliefs about learning*. Once identified, through engagement in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices, these core values and beliefs about learning will manifest themselves in a set of school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Once the school/center has established its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations it can take steps to ensure they are actively reflected in the culture of the school/center and drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in every classroom. As well, the school/center should use the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations to guide its policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. As part of the center's/school's reflective and growth processes, the center/school will also regularly review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources as well as district and other center/school priorities.

A school's/center's core values and beliefs about learning can be embedded in a "mission statement." However, mission statements- which do not specifically include and clearly identify the core values, and beliefs about learning about which stakeholders feel passionate -do not provide the foundational commitments upon which the school can make decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Therefore, schools/centers may choose to retain their "mission statement", but following this statement the school/center should specifically state their core values, beliefs about learning, and learning expectations for their students' achievement of academic & career, social, and civic competencies.

It is essential that the identified core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are the result of thoughtful conversations about the direction the entire school community wishes to pursue and the values that drive them toward that direction. To ensure that the core values and beliefs about learning reflect the larger community, it should be developed in a collaborative, dynamic, and inclusive process. This process should include administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members who have reviewed research-based best practices as well as district and school community priorities in determining the school's future direction.

The 21st century learning expectations identify the school-wide essential skills that the community and research-based best practices have determined are fundamental for all students in order to be prepared for future career and post-secondary learning. These expectations must address competencies in the following areas:

- academic & career (e.g., proficient communicators in written and spoken language, critical thinkers)
- social (e.g., effective collaborators, establish and accept personal responsibilities)

- civic (e.g., participate effectively in ones community, being an informed member of a national and global society)

What is essential is the relevance of these skills to what all students need to know to be successful in the 21st century, and that there are sufficient opportunities incorporated into student learning for students to practice and achieve each one. These skills reach beyond student knowledge and proficiency in academic subjects. Schools and centers may have more expectations that address their academic goals than those that address social and civic goals.

The identification of challenging and measurable school-wide learning expectations means that the center/school will embed the teaching of each expectation in curricula, and will assess the achievement of each learning expectation for each student. Each school/center should then create an assessment tool by which each student's attainment of the learning expectations can be objectively determined. An analytic rubric, which defines the separate components or criteria contained in an expectation as well as separate, individual descriptors defining differing levels of performance for each criterion, may be useful to this purpose.

The school's/center's core values, beliefs and learning expectations should shape the culture and determine the priorities of the school/center, and serve as the guiding force behind decision-making related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, policies, and procedures.

II. Engaging in a Dynamic, Collaborative, and Inclusive Process:

Following is a set of suggested steps school/center leaders could take to engage in a *dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process* to develop core values, beliefs, and learning expectations:

1. Determine the overall time span, tentative benchmark goals, and dates for completion of each goal as well as approval of a document. If left unscripted, the process to develop a set of core values, beliefs and learning expectations can go on for an indefinite period of time. The task can be reasonably accomplished, from start to approved document, in a school year; an aggressive schedule can accomplish the task in less time; going longer than one year may lead to a loss of focus.
2. Determine if a committee already exists in your school/center community that is inclusive of representatives of all of the constituencies that could be used to engage in such a process. Some schools/centers have an existing school council consisting of:

- students
- teachers
- administrators
- parents
- community members
- others (school board member, senior citizen and/or member of the local business community are often a part of such a group)

The composition of your group may vary slightly from school to school depending on the number of constituency groups you choose to involve. If there is no existing committee, then establish an ad-hoc committee based on the constituency groups previously mentioned.

The task of developing the center's/school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations should not be assigned to the self-study committee on core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The task of this self-study committee is to determine the degree to which the center/school adheres to its core values, beliefs, and student learning expectations rather than to develop these values and beliefs.

3. Provide the committee with background reading to give the members a broader context from which they can discuss core values, beliefs about learning and 21st century learning expectations. This assignment might include reading some of the following:

- a locally developed strategic plan
- a district mission statement
- national forums
- other state or national reports
- educational journals, books and articles

The research and resources available to inform, energize, and focus your group's thinking is voluminous and evolving so a search of the internet will easily provide foundational materials to ensure that what is eventually developed by the committee has relevance and can be defended.

4. Based on the research the committee has reviewed, they should then utilize a process to compile a broad base of values and beliefs about learning which will then be refined to a smaller "core" set of values and beliefs about learning.

Next, compile a list the 21st century learning expectations that the group has identified. Remember that these learning expectations must prepare students with the skills they feel are necessary for success in a career or post-secondary education, and they must address academic, civic, and social competencies. Most importantly, remember that these expectations are for ALL students and they represent learning skills not academic proficiencies.

If your process is to be *dynamic*, then members of the invited committee should solicit input from the larger groups they represent. Thus, each member would return to his/her representative constituency in some form and spend at least one session informing and receiving feedback from that group that can be brought back and shared with the committee.

Depending on the time frame involved these tasks may be done as three separate processes; one round for core values, one for beliefs about learning, and one for learning expectations or, they may be done in any combination the committee feels is best suited for their purposes. A suggestion would be to develop either as three separate processes or two processes, one for core values and beliefs and a second for learning expectations; to attempt all three together may be too ambitious.

5. Once the process has been completed, the committee should seek formal approval by the faculty, any site-based management group, and the school's/center's governing body.

6. The ad hoc committee's work has been completed once approvals have been obtained. The center/school should now begin to develop the following processes:

- to create and utilize an assessment tool by which each student's attainment of the learning expectations can be objectively determined
- to collect and analyze the assessment data
- to report assessment results to students, their families, and the school community.

7. Finally, begin the process of sharing with the community the newly developed core values, beliefs and learning expectations so that they become embedded in the culture of the school/center.

- ✓ *Have your core values and beliefs about learning been developed dynamically, collaboratively, and inclusively by parents, teachers, students, and community members?*
- ✓ *Do the core values and beliefs about learning represent ideals about which the school is passionate?*
- ✓ *Has your school developed academic, civic and social expectations that apply to all students?*

III. What do core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations look like?

Core Values

Core values define those qualities that are modeled by the educational practices within a center/school and established in the practices of its students. Beyond academic proficiencies, core values are what we hope students take with them into their futures.

The core values that a school and its community chose to identify can be limitless, but some schools have identified the following as examples:

- Collaboration
- Honesty
- Perseverance
- Respect
- Personal integrity
- Equity
- Intellectual curiosity
- Appreciation of diversity

There are no “correct” answers to defining which values a school should choose: core values reflect the philosophy and ethics of an institution and its community at large.

Beliefs about Learning

A school’s beliefs about learning form the basis for teaching and learning practices and decisions. Again there are a myriad of philosophies about what is fundamental to successful student learning, but some schools have identified the following as examples:

- All students have the potential to achieve, although at different paces
- Each student has something uniquely individual to offer their school and community
- Students learn best when instruction provides students with the opportunity to solve authentic problems
- Students should experience equal opportunities to work alone and to reflect on their learning and also to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others
- Students must feel safe, both physically and emotionally, in their school and their classrooms
- The use of technology is a vital tool in teaching students and for students to teach themselves

21st Century Learning Expectations

A school’s learning expectations reach beyond the acquisition and application of knowledge in specific subject areas to encompass those skills and competencies that educational research and public policy has identified as necessary for students’ to learn, and which will serve as the foundational processes for future learning in career or post-secondary education. These learning expectations address academic & career, social, and civic competencies. While these skills may change or others may be determined, some schools/centers have chosen some of the following as having relevance:

Academic & Career

- Students will solve problems in both conventional and innovative methods
- Students will communicate effectively through oral, written, visual, artistic, and technical modes of expression
- Students will demonstrate the acquisition of core knowledge in defined subject areas
- Students will read for comprehension and to effectively analyze arguments and opinions
- Students will be able to think critically as an individual and in collaboration with others
- Students will use data from multiple sources to inform decision-making

Social

- Students will demonstrate appropriate personal, interpersonal, and professional skills and behaviors
- Students will demonstrate integrity and ethics
- Students will demonstrate a respect for diversity
- Students will demonstrate self-reliance, time management, and acceptance of personal responsibility

Civic

- Students will demonstrate community involvement
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of cultural and political actions required of a responsible, active citizen
- Students will demonstrate an awareness of their global responsibility to others and the environment

Again, these are only examples and centers/schools need to determine the quantity and appropriateness of their learning expectations based on their own research and decision-making processes.

IV. Creating an Assessment Tool to Accompany the 21st Century Learning Expectations

Effective communication of these expectations is critical to their achievement by students. Students need to know what is expected of them, and the center/school is responsible for creating and implementing an assessment tool that clearly defines the academic & career, social, and civic expectations, is measurable, and reflects the center's/school's core values and beliefs about learning.

- ✓ *Have we created an assessment for each of our 21st century learning expectations so that students, parents, and teachers have a shared understanding of the meaning of each and so that students know how to reach the targeted level of achievement?*

- ✓ *Have we developed an assessment for each of the 21st century learning expectations which we will use to determine the achievement of every student in our school for that expectation?*
- ✓ *Have we identified a plan to ensure that all students are assessed regularly on each expectation?*

V. Implementing the School's Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

References to the center's/school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations occur in every Standard throughout the Committee on Technical and Career Institution's 2015 Standards for Accreditation so their importance to the school in adhering to the Standards is clearly established. The information that follows will assist schools/centers in the integration of their core values, beliefs, learning expectations into the school and district plans for continuous improvement.

Using the Core Values, Beliefs, and 21st Century Learning Expectations in Curriculum

Common Curriculum Format

The written and taught curriculum needs to be designed so that all students meet the desired level of achievement in each of the school's/center's 21st century learning expectations. Because the written curriculum is the framework within which a school/center aligns and personalizes the delivery of the 21st century learning expectations it is essential that their 21st century learning expectations be specifically written within the school's formal curriculum template, which also includes specific references to units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Without its proper place in the written curriculum it is difficult for these expectations to remain in the instructional vision of the center's/school's teachers.

Providing Students with Opportunities to Practice and Achieve the 21st Century Learning Expectations

The school/center must ensure that the curriculum will provide multiple opportunities for all students to practice and achieve the learning expectations. To illustrate this concept, let's look at a typical learning expectation – *students will write effectively*.

Let's say that a school/center has defined effective writing, regardless of where it occurs in the curricula or for what specific purpose the writing, to include the construction of a clear thesis, the use of supportive evidence, the use of transitions, a clear organizational pattern, and correct use of grammar and mechanics, etc. From this list of criteria, the school/center might create an analytic writing rubric. The school/center might decide that teachers in all departments must evaluate student writing according to the same criteria by using the same performance standard/rubric. This reinforcement across the curriculum will help students internalize the basic qualities of good writing, develop their skills, and make connections across disciplines. Not every writing assignment has to be assessed using the school-wide rubric nor must every department formally assess each students' writing skills, but the students should use the analytic rubric a number of times each term/semester so as to understand how well they are achieving this school-wide writing goal and to make the necessary adjustments to meet the targeted level of accomplishment. Also the use of the student's level of achievement on the writing rubric may or may not be integrated into the "grade" given to the student's writing which may be based on the student's achievement of specific course related proficiencies.

- ✓ *Do teachers understand that there must be a common formative assessment for each of the school's learning expectations, whether they address academic, civic, or social competencies?*
- ✓ *Do students in our school/center have an opportunity a number of times each term/semester to achieve each of the expectations, and do they make the necessary adjustments to meet the school's targeted level of achievement?*

- ✓ *Do students have opportunities in multiple disciplines to practice each of the learning expectations?*

The Standard for Accreditation on Curriculum requires that the curriculum be purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The goal of reinforcement across all departments/content areas requires that opportunities for students to practice the learning expectations are embedded in multiple curriculum areas or multiple courses within a discipline – thus the **purposeful design** of the curriculum. In other words, if writing effectively is an expectation, then the principles for writing effectively should be stressed not only in English class, but also in writing assignments required in math, science, technology, and other classes. If writing opportunities are not currently part of the curriculum in multiple disciplines, the curriculum may need to be revised to incorporate these experiences. While not every department must take responsibility for every learning expectation, it will be important that each department/content area take responsibility for some of the learning expectations. All students should have many opportunities to practice each of the expectations numerous times in many courses.

- ✓ *Is it clear in the written curriculum where each of the 21st century learning expectations is being taught?*
- ✓ *Has each department/content area assumed responsibility for teaching and formatively assessing some of the learning expectations?*
- ✓ *Does the center's/school's formal curriculum template include specific references to the learning expectations?*

Using the Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations in Instruction

Adopting Instructional Practices Consistent with the Core Values and Beliefs about Learning

Offering students opportunities within the curriculum to practice the center's/school's learning expectations is only one part of the expectations of the Standards. The Standard for Accreditation on Instruction requires that schools use instructional strategies consistent with the core values and beliefs about learning it has developed and articulated as well as with the 21st century learning expectations; these strategies and practices will help students meet the acceptable level of performance for each learning expectation. For example, if a center/school believes, as expressed in its core values and beliefs, that students learn best by applying knowledge, teachers need to provide numerous opportunities for students to practice the application of knowledge. Teachers might ask students to write for audiences beyond the classroom, share portfolios with parents and critical friends, engage in project work that leads to formal public presentations, participate in internships and school-to-career opportunities, etc. In support of a school-wide learning expectation related to writing effectively, English teachers might adopt a writing workshop approach to teach students the essential components of the effective writing rubric. In math classes, teachers might ask student to write *how* they would solve a problem in addition to actually solving the problem. To teach students how to construct a thesis, science teachers might require students to defend a hypothesis in a lab report, not just to chronicle the steps of an experiment. In a carpentry class the teacher may ask students to write a response to a writing prompt about post and beam construction. These examples simply serve to illustrate the importance of employing instructional strategies that are consistent with the school's core values and beliefs about learning and enable students to practice and achieve school-wide learning expectations.

Using the Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations in Assessment

Assessing Individual Student and the School's Achievement of the Learning Expectations

Assessment becomes the critical piece in determining the extent to which students are achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. In order to know how well each student is achieving the learning expectations the school has set forth for students, the school must develop an assessment process for monitoring achievement by all students of each of the learning expectations. Schools/centers need to develop *local* classroom assessment procedures that are deliberately focused to assess the learning expectations. As part of the local assessment process, the school must develop procedures for gathering individual student data and aggregating that data to determine school-wide achievement.

Some centers/schools have developed procedures that identify specific departments with the responsibility of ensuring specific learning expectations are taught and assessed. While the expectations and the formative assessments would and should be used in many other areas, these identified areas become the control through which enough data is acquired to make reasonable judgments on individual student's proficiency as well as the school-wide proficiency.

✓ *Are all students made aware of their progress toward achieving each of the school's learning expectations?*

Monitoring and Reporting Student Performance on the Learning Expectations

Local assessments should be used to generate data about both individual and overall student achievement of the academic expectations in the mission. Individual student achievement of school-wide expectations must be communicated to students and their parents. Aggregate results of achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations must be reported to the school community (school board or committee, district leaders, parents, etc.). Data about overall student achievement of the learning expectations should be used to guide decision-making and to communicate school performance to the school community. Communities generally receive little information about school performance beyond standardized test results. Local assessments give schools a valuable opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness by reporting student progress in those areas of student learning (the school's 21st century learning expectations) deemed most critical by the school community itself which helped write the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

School leaders should be aware that in assessing a school's adherence to the Standards for Accreditation, the Committee does not evaluate the school based on student achievement of the school-wide learning expectations. Rather, the Commission assesses the school's practices which enable students to achieve the learning expectations, its knowledge of student achievement of school-wide learning expectations, and the school's use of this knowledge to change and inform what is taught (curriculum) and how it is taught (instruction) as well as how the school/center uses the data it has gathered to review and modify the 21st century learning expectations. When a school/center has accomplished these steps, it is ensuring the implementation of its core values, beliefs about learning, and its 21st century learning expectations.

- ✓ *Do teachers provide students with performance standards (for instance, analytic rubrics) before each unit of study?*
- ✓ *Do we have a process which ensures the consistent use of the performance standards, as well as a process for gathering that data with all students in order to monitor individual student achievement and the school's progress in achieving each of the school's learning expectations?*
- ✓ *Do we communicate individual progress of student achievement of the 21st century learning expectations to students and their families?*
- ✓ *Do we communicate data about overall student achievement of the learning expectations to the school community?*

Becoming a Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations Driven School

The center's/school's core values, beliefs about learning, and learning expectations formally articulates their foundational commitments to students and the community-at-large, and must serve to guide changes in all areas of the center/school. A school/center that uses these core values and beliefs about learning in this way is truly delivering on its promise to its stakeholders. It is a school/center where students, teachers, parents, and administrators are very clear about their core values and beliefs about learning. This expression ensures that every student works to achieve each learning expectation, and provides its students with the skills and competencies required for career and college readiness.

VI. Overview of the Process for Developing and Using 21st Century Learning Expectations

1. Determine your school's/center's process for engaging all constituent groups in the community and reviewing current research on 21st century learning skills
2. Using your process, define the school's/center's core values, beliefs and learning expectations
3. Create an assessment for each learning expectation, indicating the targeted level of achievement for each expectation
4. Provide multiple opportunities for every student to practice and achieve each expectation by embedding the learning expectations in curriculum and instruction
5. Ensure that teachers' instructional practices are consistent with the school's/center's core values, beliefs and learning expectations
6. Ensure that departments/content areas/ teams assume responsibility for teaching and assessing the learning expectations

7. Assess achievement by each student on each expectation and gather assessment data
8. Report individual achievement based on each of the learning expectations to students and their families and school-wide data to the school community
9. Review the data and use it to improve curriculum, instruction and increase student learning

VII. Sample Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Following is a *sample which includes*

- *a statement a narrative/mission statement(optional)*
- *a defined set of core values*
- *a set of beliefs about student learning*
- *a set of 21st century learning expectations which include academic & career, social, and civic competences that every student is expected to achieve*

Please note that the following is a model not an exemplar

MISSION STATEMENT (optional)

Millennial Technical High School/Career Center is a community of adult and student learners who believe that a career and technical education is a vital link in preparing students for life in the remainder of the 21st century. We commit to working with families and community members to support the personal, academic and career growth of every student. We believe that students must have a common core of knowledge, a set of skills to effectively utilize that knowledge, and an understanding of our responsibilities to our self and others in order to participate effectively in a global society.

CORE VALUES

- Honesty
- Perseverance
- Respect
- Personal integrity
- Collaboration

BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING

- All students have the potential to achieve, although at different paces
- Each student has something unique to offer their school and community
- Students learn best when instruction provides them with the opportunity to solve authentic problems
- Students should experience equal opportunities to work alone and to work collaboratively with others

- Students must feel safe, both physically and emotionally, in their center/school and their classrooms

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Academic & Career

- Students will be able to solve problems in both conventional and innovative methods
- Students will communicate effectively through oral, written, visual, artistic, and technical modes of expression
- Students will demonstrate the acquisition of core knowledge in defined subject areas
- Students will read for comprehension and to effectively analyze arguments and opinions
- Students will be able to think critically as an individual and in collaboration with others
- Students will use data from multiple sources to inform decision-making

Social

- Students will demonstrate appropriate personal, interpersonal, and professional skills and behaviors
- Students will demonstrate a respect for diversity

Civic

- Students will demonstrate community involvement
- Students will demonstrate an awareness of their global responsibility to others and the environment

VIII. Sample Chart of Responsibility for Learning Expectations

A center/school must have a *purposeful design* to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's learning expectations. It is strongly encouraged that every department/content area/team in a school assumes responsibility *for at least one of the school's learning expectations* and then further identifies the application of learning expectations by course. Some schools/centers prefer to indicate primary and secondary responsibility while others specifically delegate which learning expectation(s) a department/team must incorporate into its curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment.

Example

	Write effectively	Speak effectively	Read effectively	Use a variety of tech and info resources to gather and synthesize data	Use critical thinking skills
English	X	X	X		X
Science	X	X		X	X
Math		X		X	X
Social Studies	X	X	X	X	X
World Languages	X	X	X		
Art		X		X	
Music		X		X	X
Culinary Arts	X	X	X	X	X
Media Production	X	X	X	X	X

IX. Final Thought

While this guide provides specific and useful information, it is not designed to encompass *all* of the applications of the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations found in the Standards for Accreditation. Schools and centers should always remember that the Committee for Technical and Career Institutions professional staff are a ready and valuable resource available to assist you in achieving the implementation of the Standards and plotting your course for continuous school improvement.