



2020 - A VISION FOR LEARNING

ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

for Public Elementary, Middle and High Schools seeking Accreditation

Revised Fall 2021

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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Overview of the Redesigned Accreditation Process

The NEASC Accreditation process is a 10-year cycle intended to serve as a guide for schools to meet their own goals for student learning based on alignment with research-based Standards for Accreditation. Secondly, it serves as an important exercise for assessing the systems in place for self-reflection on an ongoing basis and the ability to be an effective learning organization.

Guiding Principles for the Redesigned Accreditation Process

Over the past several years, the Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools (CPEMHS) has been involved in a purposeful effort to reflect on the value of Accreditation and redesign the Accreditation process to better meet the changing needs of member schools. Numerous regional meetings were held to gather feedback from member schools and districts, and multiple advisory committees with representatives from accredited schools and districts were convened to help us brainstorm new ideas and revise current practices. A Standards review committee recommended a new set of Standards for Accreditation, which were accepted by the Commission on Public Schools (CPS). Throughout this collaborative process, a set of principles guided the redesign work. These principles were developed based on input from member school representatives about what they want the Accreditation process to provide for their schools. The principles are as follows:

The Accreditation process:

- ensures a growth-oriented and inquiry-based approach
- promotes capacity building
- allows for creativity and differentiation
- emphasizes student learning outcomes.

The Accreditation process:

- encourages a vision for growth and development in schools
- fosters school improvement by encouraging schools to self-reflect, set, and work towards goals, and act on feedback for continuous progress toward its vision for growth
- supports schools to create or maintain structures and collaborative cultures for systemic learning for both students and adults that result in sustainable growth
- supports schools in developing manageable priorities that are complementary to other initiatives or obligations.

The Accreditation process:

- integrates more fully with school and district priorities and state requirements
- corresponds with the time schools allocate for ongoing school improvement efforts
- provides flexibility for schools to determine who should be a part of the Accreditation process and in what capacity
- responds to and allows for differentiation among schools
- leverages technology to make the Accreditation process more streamlined and efficient.

By using these principles, in addition to the CPEMHS mission and core values, as a guide, it is the hope of CPEMHS that the new Accreditation process is adaptable to individual school needs and ensures every school has ongoing support from NEASC to move forward on its journey toward growth and improvement.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Founded in 1885, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the nation's oldest regional accrediting association. It serves over 1,500 public, independent, and international schools and colleges in the six states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, and countries around the world.

The Association is composed of three Commissions:

- the Commission on Public Schools (CPS)
- the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS)
- the Commission on International Education (CIE).

NEASC has recently completed a corporate restructuring to align with the U.S. Department of Education's requirement that our higher education commission, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), operate as a "separate and independent" entity. CIHE now operates as the New England Commission on Higher Education, Inc. (NECHE). The restructuring enables both entities to pursue their unique missions and to collaborate across the K-16 continuum in ways that serve the interests of our entire membership.

The Association's purpose is exclusively educational. It serves the public and the educational community by (1) establishing and maintaining high Standards of educational excellence and (2) using Accreditation processes which focus on self-improvement through effective peer review. Schools, which voluntarily demonstrate through the Association's Accreditation processes that they meet established Standards, are accredited, and thus become members of the Association.

Member schools and colleges must undertake a self-reflection process involving the participation of faculty, administrators, staff, students, community members, and board members. A team of peers, composed of professional educators who have volunteered to serve on the visiting team, visits an institution to evaluate its alignment with stated Standards, a process that includes reviewing the findings of the Self-Reflection and identifying areas of strength and making recommendations that will lead school improvement. School personnel then respond to recommendations stated in the visiting team report by designing and implementing short-term and long-range plans for improvement.

Accreditation is not a permanent status. Membership in the Association depends on schools' demonstrating continued improvement and alignment to Standards through a regular cycle of routine and special progress reports. In addition, membership in the Association requires that all member institutions (1) pay annual dues and (2) provide quality educators to serve on visiting teams for other member institutions. This latter requirement is essential to the operation of the Association which depends on volunteers to staff teams.

Commissions within the Association are empowered to act related to a school's continued Accreditation.

The Commission on Public Schools

The Commission on Public Schools (CPS) was approved. CPS includes two Committees:

- the Committee on [Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools \(CPEMHS\)](#)
- the Committee on [Technical and Career Institutions \(CTCI\)](#)

The Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

The Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools (CPEMHS) serves over 620 elementary, middle, K-8, K-12, middle/high, and high schools in New England.

It is composed of 30 Committee members who are elected by member school delegates at the Association's Annual Meeting. These include:

- 20 school- or district-level administrators from each of the six New England states
- 5 teachers or other educators from each of the six New England states
- 5 educational partners

In addition, the CPS office has professional and support staff members who work to assist member schools with the Accreditation process.

The Commission meets three times per year to review Collaborative Conference Reports, Decennial Accreditation Reports, and progress reports presented on behalf of member schools and those institutions seeking Initial Accreditation.

CPEMHS Mission Statement and Core Values

Mission Statement

The Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools in partnership with member schools ensures, through an ongoing Accreditation process, that all students experience an equitable, quality education vital to the success of a democratic society.

Core Values

To achieve our mission CPEMHS commits to...

- maintain relevant and dynamic Standards of Accreditation which define a quality education
- support member schools through self-evaluation, peer review, and ongoing monitoring
- support research-based practices critical to continuous school improvement
- model a culture of self-reflection, collaboration, and inquiry.

To support the CPEMHS mission, member schools agree to...

- participate actively in the Accreditation process
- demonstrate alignment to the Standards for Accreditation which fosters academic, social, civic growth for students, professional development for faculty, and continuous improvement for schools.

The Meaning and Value of Accreditation

The Meaning of Accreditation

Accreditation of public schools by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) indicates that the educational institution has conducted a self-evaluation of all its programs and hosted a visiting team to evaluate the institution in terms of its own stated educational goals and the Standards for Accreditation.

The Standards for Accreditation are a research-based set of practices and concepts that provide guidance to schools on all aspects of the education, academic, civic, and social, of the learners under their care. The Standards are living documents and are reviewed and revised as necessary. The process of review includes surveys of all member schools, specific consideration of feedback provided by schools that have recently participated in an Accreditation visit, an appraisal of recent, relevant educational literature, and in-depth discussions. As needed, third parties, including consultants, are contracted to conduct relevant research to inform the revision of the Standards. The Standards are reflective of current trends in research on public education without espousing one mode of thought.

The awarding of Accreditation signifies that the school has met the Standards for Accreditation at an acceptable level and is committed to both maintaining those Standards and to improving its educational program by implementing the recommendations of the visiting team and the Commission. Continued Accreditation is dependent upon a school's demonstrating ongoing, reflective progress to improve teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning.

Membership in and Accreditation by NEASC is like membership in other professional organizations. with a commitment toward continual self-assessment, a pledge to self-improvement, and a desire to maintain the Standards for Accreditation.

The Value of Accreditation

Value to Students and Families

Students are most affected by Accreditation because they are the central focus of the educational process. Accreditation assures that their needs are being met through a quality educational program, that a vehicle exists to correct deficiencies in the school program, that transfer credits will more likely be accepted should their family move, and that college representatives have the assurance of the quality of their preparation. Confidence in their school and teachers, attitude toward academic work, and personal development are fostered by seeing their school invite, and respond to, constructive criticism. Alignment to the Standards ensures the singular focus of school resources on students' achievement of valued learning expectations articulated in the school's public statement of core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

Value to Local Citizens and Taxpayers

Accreditation of a local public school by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges assures that tax money is supporting a school facility and programs that have been judged worthwhile by a visiting team, both in terms of the school's stated core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate, and the school's alignment to the Standards for Accreditation. Through the process of Accreditation, local citizens are advised of the strengths, needs, and long-range plans of the school. Finally, the reputation of the community benefits from Accreditation because the retention or the loss of Accreditation has a demonstrable effect on local property values. It is common for principals of member schools to receive inquiries from potential homebuyers or renters seeking information about the nature and quality of programs in that community's schools. In addition to requests for information about the breadth of curricular and co-curricular programs, and about standardized and state test results, those inquiries often include specific questions about a school's Accreditation status. Assumedly, a lack of Accreditation would discourage individuals so informed from pursuing residency in those communities.

Value to School Board Members

School board members are ultimately responsible for the quality of public education in their town. Accreditation assures the citizens that the board's educational policies and plans are sound.

The Self-Reflection phase of the Accreditation process provides an ideal opportunity for an individual board member to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the school as it undergoes the process of assessment and Accreditation. If changes are needed, the Accreditation process highlights them.

The Accreditation process provides the school with a process that involves the school community in an introspective analysis of the nature and quality of school programs. The Standards for Accreditation and the Self-Reflection process encourages reflective behaviors that all organizations must embrace to be able to maintain their vibrancy and efficacy.

Value to Building Administrators and Teachers

The school's administrators and staff enjoy the professional pride of working in an accredited institution. Accreditation provides both a personal and professional opportunity to work in a collegial, reflective manner toward educational improvement. The Accreditation experience affords the opportunity for administrators and faculty members to conduct and to receive a rigorous analysis of present conditions with a specific emphasis on teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning so that needed changes may be carefully planned and implemented following a reasonable timeline. Individuals develop a new perspective on their own positions and a view of the school as a whole which affords a better understanding of their role. The Accreditation process affirms the efforts of teachers and administrators by having voluntarily subjected their professional endeavors to review and judgment by a team of their peers, using the demanding Accreditation Standards to measure the quality of those endeavors.

Results of an NEASC survey involving schools that hosted a visiting team provide positive and thoughtful responses. Cited among the most significant findings related to the impact of Accreditation on the quality of a school's educational program are improved instruction; enhanced teamwork and collegiality; increased focus on current research and best practice; improved organization effectiveness and long-range planning; expanded professional development programs; and increased involvement of parents and community members in the school, including their support for school initiatives. Narrative findings from the respondents on the benefits of the Accreditation process are the positive impact of the Standards for Accreditation in transitioning a school to a standards-based, student-centered educational program; the stimulation of professional dialogue engendering positive change; the commitment to increased levels of academic challenge and improved student achievement; and the provision of a system of continuity that promotes educational quality among member schools.

Value to System Administrators

The Standards for Accreditation provide a template for school review and improvement that can be combined with local, state, and federal initiatives focused on compliance with mandates and on restructuring efforts. The Standards are reflective of best practices. They are strongly based on core concepts of accountability, equity, collaboration, personalization, and student engagement, and provide latitude for individual schools to design programs and services specific to the needs of their stakeholders.

The Standards provide a template that is adaptable to local use. They provide for a cyclical review of all aspects of school programs and mandate consistency with the school district mission and coordination of curriculum with other district schools. The Accreditation process provides a rich opportunity to integrate system programs and processes during the Self-Reflection phase of the decennial cycle, assess their effectiveness as part of the on-site Accreditation visit, and continue to effect changes throughout the follow-up phase.

Accreditation Methodology

Accreditation is the oldest and most traditional of the Standards-based systems of accountability. A study of the regional Accreditation process conducted by the LAB at Brown University¹ found that the NEASC Accreditation visit, the “signature event of Accreditation,” is built upon a legitimate and valuable methodology for learning how well a school functions. This methodology, which is centered on a dynamic of inquiry, involves a visiting team of peers generating knowledge about practices in the school and then drawing conclusions about how well they align with the Standards for Accreditation. The visiting team identifies commendations and recommendations for what the school should do to improve.

The follow-up procedures are designed to ensure that all priority areas and recommendations are acted upon in a timely fashion. The Commission expects that, within six years, priority areas and recommendations in the Initial or Decennial Accreditation Report will be completed or have a program/plan in place that will bring them to completion within a reasonable time. The Commission’s general expectation is that the school will continue to make reasonable progress toward meeting the priority areas and recommendations. This process of self-renewal provides for continuous reassessment considering changing school and community needs and advances in pedagogy and school administration/organization.

¹ Thomas A. Wilson. *Visiting Accreditation: Strengthening the Regional Accreditation Process*. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University, 1999.

Summary

In summary, the goal of Accreditation is to maintain a quality education for all learners. Accreditation ensures that through a mutually agreed-upon process there has been a third-party examination by peers of the extent to which a school aligns with the Commission’s Standards for Accreditation. The results of that assessment are then made publicly available as an indication of the quality perceived and attested to by objective professional educators.

Initial Accreditation

The Commission requires that a school seeking initial Accreditation first apply as a Candidate.

In order to become a Candidate, a school must complete an Application for Candidacy and meet the criteria for Candidacy as articulated in the Commission Policy. The application must include a narrative assessment of the school's practices as they relate to those called for in the Standards. Upon receipt of the application, the school should contact the Commission's Director for Accreditation and School Improvement to set a mutually convenient date for a CPS staff member to visit the school. The fee for the Candidacy visit must be submitted with the application.

The visit includes a tour of the facility, meetings with administrators and faculty, and classroom observations.

A written report of the visit to the school is submitted to the Commission along with the school's application. The Commission informs the school in writing of its decision to award Candidacy status in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Once granted Candidacy status, a school is assessed dues equal to those of member schools.

Candidacy status can be maintained for a maximum of three years, during which time the school must prepare its self-reflection, host a Collaborative Conference visit, and an Initial Decennial Accreditation visit.

Standards for Accreditation

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Committee on Public Elementary, Middle, and High Schools require member schools to demonstrate alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. The new Standards for Accreditation, effective for all schools in 2020, are streamlined into five core Standards intended to promote an effective learning organization with the capacity to meet the needs of all students through continuous reflection and growth.

Standards for Accreditation

Standard 1 LEARNING CULTURE	Learning Culture promotes shared values and responsibility for achieving the school’s vision.
Standard 2 STUDENT LEARNING	Student Learning practices maximize the impact of learning for each student.
Standard 3 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES	Professional Practices ensure that practices and structures are in place to support and improve student learning.
Standard 4 LEARNING SUPPORT	Learning Support ensures that the school has appropriate systems to support student learning and well-being.
Standard 5 LEARNING RESOURCES	Learning Resources ensure that the school has the resources necessary to meet the learning needs of all students.

In the 2020 Standards for Accreditation, each Standard includes Principles of Effective Practice which define the expectations for that Standard. Schools will be asked to reflect on and report progress in aligning with the Principles for each Standard. At a minimum, Accredited schools must align with each of the Foundational Elements. The Foundational Elements represent essential building blocks for each Standard. Schools that are not yet aligned with Foundational Elements are expected to prioritize work to ensure alignment with those Elements. To assist schools in aligning with the Standards, there are Descriptors of Effective Practice, which serve as examples of what each Principle looks like in practice in a school. Descriptors are guidance or benchmarks to assist schools in aligning with each Principle.

The full text of the CPS Standards for Accreditation can be found on the NEASC website.



Foundational Elements

Standards for Accreditation	Foundational Elements
Standard 1 LEARNING CULTURE	The school community provides a safe environment. The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.
Standard 2 STUDENT LEARNING	There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school.
Standard 3 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES	The school has a current School Improvement/Growth Plan.
Standard 4 LEARNING SUPPORT	The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners.
Standard 5 LEARNING RESOURCES	The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.

Rubrics for the Standards for Accreditation

Schools will assess alignment to each of the Foundational Elements and Principles in the Standards for Accreditation, based on evidence, using the following rubric.

Foundational Elements Rubric

Use the criteria in the rubric to determine whether the school is meeting each of the Foundational Elements in the Standards.

Meets	Does Not Meet
All criteria of the Foundational Element are evident in the school.	Some criteria of the Foundational element are not yet evident in the school.

Principle Rubric

Use the following continuum to determine the school’s current phase of implementation which best describes the school’s alignment to each Principle in the Standard.

Not yet evident	Elements of the Principle are not yet evident in the school.
Initiating “Thinking About It”	The ideas and concepts in the Principle are being considered by the school community, but not yet in action
Developing “Working on It”	Some elements of the Principle are in place and the school has developed plans and timelines for full implementation.
Implementing “Living It”	All elements of the Principle are firmly in place in the school. Organizations or systems have been formed to support and sustain these practices.
Transforming “Shifting the paradigm”	The Principle is driving innovative and transformative practices to achieve the school’s vision of the graduate.

Step 1 – Planning Ahead

A NOTE ON WHAT'S NEW:

- ✓ *Schools are no longer required to assign all staff members to a Standard committee during the Self-Reflection phase. Schools now can differentiate the use of their staff, assigning a representative number of staff members to participate on the committee(s) that best meets the needs of the school.*
- ✓ *The Self-Reflection phase has been streamlined so that schools will be able to reduce the length of time for this step to no longer than 2 - 6 months.*

Overall Purpose of the Self-Reflection

In year one of the Accreditation cycle, the school reflects on its alignment to the NEASC Standards. The purpose of the Self-Reflection is to gather and examine sufficient evidence to evaluate the school's alignment to the Standards. The Self-Reflection phase and related data collection informs the school's future plan for growth. It should be viewed as a research and reflection step to help the school sharpen its vision and action steps for continuous improvement.

Length of the Self-Reflection

Based on several variables, such as the size of the professional staff, the allocation of release time, and the amount of time needed to complete existing initiatives, the Self-Reflection will take approximately 4 to 6 months.

Opinion Surveys

Prior to beginning the Self-Reflection, the school will conduct an online survey of students, parents, and faculty members. The survey provides an external perspective to help assess the school's alignment to the Standards for Accreditation. The survey tool will be provided to schools from NEASC at no cost. This external survey data is used as evidence during the Self-Reflection phase. The school should administer the survey in the fall or spring prior to beginning the Self-Reflection process. It is important to ensure a valid response from all those surveyed, and the Committee expects a response rate of 95 percent or more from professional staff and students and 25 percent or more from parents. The survey will also be available for use annually by schools interested in identifying areas of growth.

The Steering Committee

The school establishes a steering committee to lead them through the key steps of the Accreditation process.

- The steering committee has oversight of the Accreditation process and will determine how the Self-Reflection phase will progress.
- The steering committee is responsible for communicating consistently about the progress and next steps throughout the Accreditation process to keep the full faculty and all school stakeholders informed and engaged.
- The steering committee consists of 3-8 faculty members, depending upon the size of the school, and includes the principal.
- The steering committee includes two Accreditation Coordinators, who are selected by the principal from the faculty.

Formation of the Steering Committee

The principal forms a steering committee to oversee all aspects of the Accreditation process. The principal serves as a member of the steering committee. The principal should have an in-depth understanding of the Standards for Accreditation. While the principal does not have specific assignments, he or she provides guidance on school policies and procedures as well as additional assistance where needed, as in arranging release time to work on the Self-Reflection, and in securing funds for the Accreditation budget. The principal should attend all steering committee meetings.

The steering committee should be a representative group of individuals who can work well with others and have effective leadership skills. While most schools limit the committee to the professional staff, it need not be limited to the teaching faculty. The principal should appoint two members of the professional staff as Accreditation Coordinators, who lead the steering committee. The Accreditation Coordinators must have excellent leadership ability with the talent to coordinate the work of many people. An Accreditation Coordinator may be an administrator (not the principal), a department head/coordinator, or a teacher. The Accreditation Coordinators must have an in-depth understanding of the Standards for Accreditation.

The size of the steering committee may vary with the size of the faculty and size and grade span of the school. Most committees will include between three and eight members. The committee should reflect the grade span of the school. Steering committee members act as support for the Self-Reflection committee and, in general, should not serve on other committees, unless the size of the school necessitates more help on those committees. The steering committee need not be a new and/or special ad hoc committee. It may be a standing committee.

The CPS staff strongly recommends that steering committee members, as well as representatives of the Self-Reflection committee, serve on visiting teams to other schools being accredited to broaden their understanding of the Accreditation process.

Purpose of the Steering Committee

The purpose of the steering committee is to:

- design and oversee the Accreditation process
- develop a comprehensive understanding of the *relationships* between each of the Standards for Accreditation to help all staff members understand the Standards and process
- ensure preparation of the School and Community Summary (*the steering committee will write this brief document*), and the Self-Reflection Report
- coordinate efforts to collect evidence
- provide state report information
- involve school personnel in the Self-Reflection process
- include parents, students, and community members (where appropriate) in the Self-Reflection process
- ensure that requirements and timelines are met
- ensure that all evidence and documentation are available for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial Accreditation visiting teams when they are on-site
- ensures that all components of the Self-Reflection Report and other information is complete in the portal
- complete the arrangements for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial Accreditation visits.

The Self-Reflection Committee

The school develops a committee to conduct the Self-Reflection and write the Self-Reflection Report.

The Self-Reflection committee:

- determines the extent to which the school is aligned to the Standards for Accreditation through a reflective process based on evidence
- is made up of various members of the school community and reviews all the Standards or, alternately, several smaller subcommittees or focus groups can be formed to assist in completing the Self-Reflection
- is representative of multiple stakeholders in the school community, such as administrators, teachers, other professional staff members, support staff members, parents, students, community members, etc.
- engages the school's faculty in the Self-Reflection phase through involvement in the collection of evidence, providing input and feedback, and regular progress updates.

The Self-Reflection committee is primarily responsible for completing Part 2 of the Self-Reflection Report. However, the committee should find ways to include and draw information from faculty members, administrators, students, families, and other stakeholders as it completes the Self-Reflection. The committee should enlist additional help from the faculty and administration in sections in which evidence or background knowledge is needed. The committee should have a thorough discussion about information in all parts of the report and ensure that all committee members are in consensus and that the report reflects the school accurately.

Steering Committee Checklist – Steps 1 - 3

Getting Started

1. The principal selects Accreditation coordinators
2. Attend the Accreditation Seminar – the principal and Accreditation Coordinators
3. Establish the steering committee
4. Establish the Self-Reflection committee
5. Contact the NEASC staff liaison assigned to the school and schedule site visit for training the steering and Self-Reflection committees and presenting information to the faculty
6. Develop Self-Reflection schedule/timeline after meeting with the NEASC staff liaison
7. Submit press release on Self-Reflection
8. Order and administer the NEASC opinion surveys
9. Ensure the inclusion of parents, students, faculty members, and support staff members in the process
10. Apprise central office professional staff members of their role(s) in the Self-Reflection
11. Prepare budget in collaboration with the principal
12. Make preliminary plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit
13. Write the School and Community Summary and share with faculty

Self-Reflection

1. Monitor evidence-gathering and check for quality and quantity of evidence
2. Monitor analysis of evidence by the Self-Reflection committee
3. Monitor development of the Self-Reflection Report
4. Distribute Part 2 of the report, by Standard, to professional staff seeking comments/questions
5. Conduct (a) formal presentation(s) and vote on Part 2, using the established protocol
6. Develop a process for gathering faculty input to develop Priority Areas for Growth
7. Establish Priority Areas for Growth determined by the leadership team
8. Distribute draft Self-Reflection Report to faculty
9. Make final edits to the Self-Reflection Report to ensure completeness and accuracy
10. Ensure that all elements of the Self-Reflection Report are entered in the portal using the Self-Reflection Checklist

Collaborative Conference Visit

1. Review all components of the on-site visit with the chair of the Collaborative Conference visiting team, including the schedule using the Collaborative Conference Checklist
2. Finalize hotel, meals, and other logistical arrangements
3. Prepare list of teacher's individual daily schedules
4. Provide materials for the workroom at the school
 - Self-Reflection documents, including materials identified in the Self-Reflection Report that have not been entered in the portal or linked to a web-based drive and need to be made available
 - laptops/printers/LCD projector (consult with chair)
 - clerical supplies
5. Prepare list of school activities occurring during the on-site visit
6. Prepare a list of rooms and times for small-group meetings with the visiting team, based on the schedule prepared by the chair and school
7. Prepare emergency information for the visiting team
8. Make name tags for visiting team members and professional and support staff members
9. Ensure professional and support staff members, other school system personnel, parents, students, and community members are available to meet with members of the visiting team based on the schedule for the visit

School and Community Summary

The steering committee is responsible for writing the School and Community Summary. The School and Community Summary is a 2–4-page (750-1,500 words) narrative, which provides general information about the school, its location, and its place within the community. A sample description is included in the Appendix.

1. Gather the information/data for each of the following:
 - location of the town/city/district in the state
 - the socio-economic profile of the community
 - racial/cultural/ethnic makeup of the school district
 - number of district families living below the poverty level
 - number of schools in the system/district (public and independent)
 - grade configuration of the school
 - current student population
 - enrollment stability
 - expenditure per pupil for students assigned to the school in relation to state average
 - percentage of local resources spent on public education
 - percentage of local taxation spent on schools
 - annual dropout rate, stated as a percentage
 - graduation rate, stated as a percentage
 - attendance rate of students
 - attendance rate of teachers, excluding professional days
 - percentage of students who attend four-year colleges, attend two-year colleges, enter directly into the work force, and enter the military
 - local educational opportunities available to students and the community
 - school/business partnerships
 - school/college partnerships
 - student recognition programs
2. Review the information to ensure its accuracy.
3. Write a narrative summary which incorporates the items in number 1 above and limit your narrative to 750-1,500 words. (See the Appendix for a sample.)
4. Make the School and Community Summary available to the professional staff for their review. The summary does not have to be approved by the professional staff; however, the staff should have the opportunity to review it and to provide clarification and input.

Developing an Accreditation Budget

Many of the expenses of an on-site visit relate to the size of the visiting teams, which will vary depending on the school. The school should discuss the size and makeup of the visiting teams with the school's CPS liaison.

Training Seminars for School Personnel

CPS sponsors regional Self-Reflection Seminars for principals and Accreditation Coordinators of schools about to commence its Self-Reflection. The purpose of the seminar is to acquaint the school with the procedures of the Accreditation process.

Additionally, there are Decennial Visit Seminars in the spring and fall for member schools that will host Decennial Accreditation visiting teams in the following season. These seminars provide some last-minute suggestions and an opportunity to ask questions. The seminars give schools an opportunity to share reactions to the Self-Reflection process with members of the CPS staff and to discuss the events/schedule of the Decennial Accreditation visiting team. Schools find these meetings helpful in assuring that everything is in place for the Decennial Accreditation visiting team's arrival and work.

Finally, there are Follow-Up Seminars in the spring and fall of each year for member schools that have hosted Decennial Accreditation visiting teams the previous season. The purpose of these seminars is to help schools organize and monitor their follow-up programs as well as to explain the requirements for completion of Progress Reports and responses to highlighted recommendations. Schools are charged \$200 for a team of three to attend each seminar: Accreditation, Decennial Visit, and Follow-Up.

Re-evaluation Fee

Each school is assessed the re-evaluation fee which is equivalent to a year's membership dues. The school will receive an invoice at the time of the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Accommodations

Schools will need to budget for hotel rooms for the Collaborative Conference Visit and for the Decennial Accreditation Visit. Schools should reserve a single hotel room for each visiting team member which provides basic amenities such as private bath, phone, television, and complimentary Wi-Fi. It is recommended that the school request the hotel's corporate or governmental rate for the visiting team and retain the right to return any rooms which are not used by the visiting team.

Conference Room at Hotel for Decennial Visit

The conference room should be adequate in size and provide appropriate privacy and security for the Collaborative Conference and for the Decennial Accreditation visiting teams. Please consult with your CPS staff liaison to help determine the appropriate size.

Meals

Breakfast and dinner should be provided in the hotel with lunch served at the school. Approximate meal costs at the hotel can be determined by consulting the hotel staff.

Visiting Team Travel Expenses

Only those travel expenses, such as mileage at the federal rate per mile and tolls incurred by visiting team members traveling to and from the school site should be paid by the school. Personal expenses are not reimbursable. Some schools require that people receiving reimbursement provide personal information such as social security numbers. If this is required, the school should notify the school's CPS liaison. If this is the case, all reimbursement requests will then be submitted to the NEASC office through the visiting team chair and the school will be billed by NEASC for the cost of the reimbursement.

Chair's Travel Expenses

The visiting team chair and the assistant chair will travel to the school for a preliminary visit approximately one month prior to the Initial or Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Budget Estimates

Item	Cost
Seminars (There will be no cost if the seminar is conducted virtually.)	
Accreditation Seminar (spring 2021)	\$200
Decennial Visit Seminar (fall 2023 or spring 2024)	\$200
Follow-Up Seminar (fall 2024 or spring 2025)	\$200
TOTAL	\$600
Collaborative Conference Visit (spring or fall 2022)	
Cost of rooms (5 guests for 1 night)	\$750
Cost of conference room at the hotel (1 day)	\$200
Cost of meals at hotel and school	\$250
Travel expenses for team members	\$500
TOTAL	\$1700
Decennial Accreditation Visit	
Cost of rooms (8 visitors: 6 for 3 nights and 2 for 4 nights)	\$3900
Cost of conference room at the hotel (3 days)	\$600
Cost of meals at hotel and school	\$1650
Travel expenses for team members	\$1500
Re-evaluation Fee (equivalent of one year's membership dues charged and will vary based on enrollment)	\$3,365
TOTAL	\$11,015

Note:

These cost estimates do not reflect regional differences. Estimates will also vary with team size.

Scheduling a CPS Staff Visit (Liaison Visit)

A visit from a member of the professional staff of the Commission on Public Schools is a crucial part of the Accreditation process. Each school has a Commission staff liaison assigned to work with the school throughout the Accreditation process.

The principal should contact the CPS staff liaison assigned to the school (identified in a letter from the director) to arrange a convenient time to visit. Meeting prior to the start of the Self-Reflection is helpful in guiding the school to make the best use of its time throughout the Accreditation process.

The staff liaison meets with the principal or leadership team, then the steering committee for a one-hour training session to highlight major points in the organization and planning of the Accreditation process. The CPS staff liaison meets with the members of the Self-Reflection committee for a one-hour training session to discuss their responsibilities and answer questions concerning the Accreditation process. The CPS staff member also addresses the entire faculty for approximately an hour to explain current procedures, the importance of the Self-Reflection, the role of the faculty and visiting teams, and the Standards for Accreditation. This service is provided at no additional cost to member schools. The CPS staff liaison will schedule visits to schools hosting spring 2024 Decennial Accreditation visits in the fall of 2021. Schools scheduled for fall 2024 Decennial Accreditation visits will be visited by the liaison in the winter of 2022, but it may be possible to schedule an earlier visit in the late fall or mid-winter of the 2021-2022 school year.

It is strongly suggested that central office administrators, interested parents, students, and school board members be invited to attend the meeting with the faculty as involvement of these groups may occur in the Self-Reflection.

In preparation for the CPS staff visit, steering committee and Self-Reflection committee members should read the Self-Reflection Guide and this Accreditation Handbook, copies of which are available on the NEASC website. In addition, the faculty should read and discuss the 2020 Standards for Accreditation.

[Materials are available on the NEASC website](#)

Accreditation Timeline

Timeline	Spring 2024 Schools	Fall 2024 Schools
Spring/ Summer 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Seminar • Establish steering committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Seminar
Fall/Winter 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Self-Reflection committee • Complete Self-Reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish steering committee • Start Self-Reflection
Winter/Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Collaborative Conference Visit • Develop Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Self-Reflection committee • Complete Self-Reflection
Fall/Winter 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Collaborative Conference Visit • Develop Growth Plan
Winter/Spring 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
Fall/Winter 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan • Write Summary Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
Winter/Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Decennial Accreditation Visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan • Write Summary Report
Fall/Winter 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Decennial Accreditation Visit
Winter/Spring 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Growth Plan
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan • First Report of Progress and Planning (spring 2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan • First Report of Progress and Planning (fall 2026)
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning • Update Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning • Update Growth Plan
2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Growth Plan
2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-Year Report of Progress and Planning • Update Growth Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-Year Report of Progress and Planning • Update Growth Plan
2032	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Continued Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Continued Accreditation

Sample Schedule for Spring 2024 Schools

May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend Accreditation Seminar (principal and Accreditation Coordinators)
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit Application for Accreditation - Draw up tentative budget for Accreditation
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive letter from CPS with date for the Decennial Accreditation Visit - Finalize selection of Accreditation Coordinators and steering committee
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solicit interest in Self-Reflection committee - Select members of the Self-Reflection committee - Schedule date for a visit by CPS staff liaison-
October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order and administer required NEASC parent, teacher, and student opinion surveys - Begin work on School and Community Summary and collection of evidence
October 2021 to March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share School and Community Summary with professional staff - Distribute opinion survey data - Collect and analyze data - Begin plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit - Accreditation Coordinators contact CPS staff liaison to update progress - Draw conclusions based on analysis of evidence and write Self-Reflection Report - Make available Parts 1 and 2 of the Self-Reflection Report for review by professional staff - Professional staff vote to accept Part 2 - Self-Reflection committee completes parts 3-5 of the Self-Reflection Report - Professional staff gives input regarding Priority Areas for Growth in Part 5 - Leadership team completes Part 5 of Self-Reflection Report - Complete entry of Self-Reflection Report and evidence in portal - Submit press release on completion of Self-Reflection - Accreditation Coordinators contact CPS staff liaison to report completion of the Self-Reflection Report
March to May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact Collaborative Conference visiting team chair to discuss topics on the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference checklists - Make preparations for the Collaborative Conference Visit - Conduct Collaborative Conference Visit
April to June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair submits draft of Collaborative Conference Report to CPS staff liaison - CPS staff liaison reviews draft and discusses it with chair; chair sends revised draft to principal; principal reviews for factual accuracy and other concerns and communicates with chair; chair prepares final Collaborative Conference Report - CPS office sends completed report to principal within six weeks of Collaborative Conference Visit

June to October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership team develops School Growth/Improvement Plan - School begins implementation of School Growth/Improvement Plan - Principal distributes Collaborative Conference Report and School Growth/Improvement Plan to the school board, central office administrators, faculty, and public
November 2022 to December 2022	- Implementation of School Growth/Improvement Plan
January to March 2024	- Complete School Summary Report
March to May 2024	- Decennial Accreditation Visit
June to October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with team chair to finalize Decennial Accreditation Report - Receive final Decennial Accreditation Report and distribute to school community and release publicly
November to December 2024	- Notification to principal, superintendent, and board chair of CPS action on report

Sample Schedule for Fall 2024 Schools

May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend Accreditation Seminar (principal and Accreditation Coordinators)
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit Application for Accreditation - Draw up tentative budget for Accreditation
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receive letter from CPS with date for the Decennial Accreditation Visit - Finalize selection of Accreditation Coordinators and steering committee
December 2021 to January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solicit interest in Self-Reflection committee - Select members of the Self-Reflection committee - Schedule date for a visit by CPS staff liaison
January to February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order and administer required NEASC parent, teacher, and student opinion surveys - Begin work on School and Community Summary and collection of evidence
February to June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share School and Community Summary with professional staff - Distribute opinion survey data - Collect and analyze data - Begin plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit - Accreditation Coordinators contact CPS staff liaison to update progress - Draw conclusions based on analysis of evidence and write Self-Reflection Report - Make available Parts 1 and 2 of the Self-Reflection Report for review by professional staff - Professional staff vote to accept Part 2 - Self-Reflection committee completes parts 3-5 of the Self-Reflection Report - Professional staff gives input regarding Priority Areas for Growth in Part 5 - Leadership team completes Part 5 of Self-Reflection Report - Complete entry of Self-Reflection Report and evidence in portal - Submit press release on completion of Self-Reflection - Accreditation Coordinators contact CPS staff liaison to report completion of the Self-Reflection Report
August to October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact Collaborative Conference chair to discuss topics on the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference checklists - Make preparations for the Collaborative Conference Visit - Conduct Collaborative Conference Visit
October to November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair submits draft of Collaborative Conference Report to CPS staff liaison - CPS staff liaison reviews draft and discusses it with chair; chair sends revised draft to principal; principal reviews for factual accuracy and other concerns and communicates with chair; chair prepares final Collaborative Conference Report - CPS office sends completed report to principal within six weeks of Collaborative Conference Visit

November 2022 to January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership team develops School Growth/Improvement Plan - School begins implementation of School Growth/Improvement Plan - Principal distributes Collaborative Conference Report and School Growth/Improvement Plan to the school board, central office administrators, faculty, and public
January to June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of School Growth/Improvement Plan
March to August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete School Summary Report
September to November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decennial Accreditation Visit
December 2024 to March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with team chair to finalize Decennial Accreditation Report - Receive final Decennial Accreditation Report and distribute to school community and release publicly
February to April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notification to principal, superintendent, and board chair of CPS action on report

Step 2 – School Self-Reflection

The Self-Reflection phase and related data collection informs the school’s plan for growth. It should be viewed as a research and reflection step to help the school sharpen its vision and action steps for continuous improvement.

Survey and Evidence Collection

Before beginning the Self-Reflection, the school will conduct an online survey of students, parents, and faculty members. The survey provides external perspective to help assess the school’s alignment to the Standards for Accreditation. The survey tool will be provided to schools from NEASC at no cost. This survey data is used as evidence during the Self-Reflection phase.

The school will collect other existing evidence to help determine its alignment with the Standards. The purpose of collecting evidence for the Self-Reflection is to assess the school’s alignment with the Standards and to provide documentation for the Self-Reflection Report. As evidence is gathered and discussed, the Self-Reflection committee may change, evolve, alter, or refine its conclusions. Use the Self-Reflection Guide with key questions to help guide the discussion and development of the Self-Reflection Report.

School and Community Summary

The steering committee is responsible for writing the School and Community Summary.

Self-Reflection Report

The Self-Reflection committee begins by reviewing the parts of the Self-Reflection Report and looking at evidence. Once the evidence has been fully deliberated and conclusions have been drawn, the Self-Reflection committee develops the Self-Reflection Report and enters the information into the NEASC Accreditation Portal. The portal is used to document the school’s Self-Reflection Report. The committee can use the portal to draft, save, and update work over time as information is finalized.

Part 1 – Look Back

In Part 1, provide a brief look back at recent milestones, improvements, and existing priorities for the school.

Part 2 – Current Conditions

In Part 2, assess and review the school’s current alignment to each Principle of Effective Practice in the Standards. As part of this review of current conditions, determine the school’s strengths and areas for growth in each Standard. See the Self-Reflection Guide for complete instructions for Part 2.

The Self-Reflection committee can upload or provide links to the evidence necessary to support the school’s rating on each Principle in the portal. Artifacts and other evidence should represent the school’s best evidence and do not need to be exhaustive. Schools are encouraged to use evidence developed or collected for other reasons, such as state or federal requirements.

Part 3 – The School as a Learning Organization

Evaluate the extent to which the school can engage in continuous growth and improvement as a learning organization, using the four criteria: Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Competency, and Capacity (4Cs). The 4Cs framework is a useful way to organize reflection on the school’s readiness for growth. Consider the following questions in the response (See also the Self-Reflection Guide, *The School as a Learning Organization - The 4Cs.*):

Conceptual Understanding

- Is there a shared understanding of effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

Commitment

- To what extent are members of the school community committed to the school’s understanding of effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

Competency

- To what extent do educators have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to implement effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

Capacity

- Does the school have the time, resources, and support needed to implement effective learning of students, educators, and the organization?

A learning organization is committed to constant growth, consistently facilitates the learning of its members, and continuously evolves. Schools whose cultures, structures, and processes facilitate ongoing student, adult, and organizational learning are learning organizations.

Part 4 – Goals and Vision for the Future

Based on the school’s vision of the graduate, describe the school’s short-term and long-range vision and goals.

Part 5 – Priority Areas for NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan

To identify Priority Areas for the NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan, the Self-Reflection committee first solicits input from the faculty. The faculty should have the chance to prioritize which areas for growth identified for each Standard in Part 2 are the most needed in the school.

Using the Self-Reflection findings, the school will assess its strengths and needs for improvement as it relates to each Standard for Accreditation and then identify areas for growth within the Standards that it wants to emphasize for further growth and improvement. These Priority Areas for Growth should be (1) any Foundational Element that the school does not yet meet, (2) any area the school needs to address to align with the Standards more fully, and (3) those areas the school wants to focus attention on based on school and district initiatives. It is recommended that the school identify three to four Priority Areas for Growth within the Standards on which to focus growth and improvement efforts. At least one of the Priority Areas for Growth must be related to student learning.

The Self-Reflection committee should use the information from the faculty’s vote to inform the school principal of their recommendations for Priority Areas for Growth. The principal then makes the final determination for the school’s Priority Areas for Growth and documents them in the NEASC

Accreditation Portal. The final agreed-upon Priority Areas for Growth are used to develop the NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan.

The school's full faculty must review, vote upon, and approve the results of only Part 2 Current Conditions of school's Self-Reflection Report. The Part 2 Current Conditions section is composed of the five Standard narratives. This full-faculty engagement provides checks and balances for the process and ensures the faculty is involved. A 2/3 majority vote is required to approve Part 2 Current Conditions, but the school is encouraged to work toward consensus with a minimum of 80 percent. The completed Self-Reflection Report must also be shared with the superintendent.

Complete instructions for the Self-Reflection can be found in the Self-Reflection Guide on the NEASC website.

Self-Reflection Checklist – Step 2

The following checklist should be used by the steering committee to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized. This checklist should be reviewed with the chair of the Collaborative Conference visiting team to ensure that all materials are available and meet the needs of the Collaborative Conference team members.

If the Self-Reflection materials are not available for timely distribution to the members of the Collaborative Conference visiting team or are of a quality that precludes their effective use by the team, the Collaborative Conference will be postponed or canceled.

School and Community Summary

- School and Community Summary uploaded in the portal
- Core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate uploaded in the portal

Self-Reflection Report

- Part 1 – Look Back
- Part 2 – Current Conditions
- Part 3—The School as a Learning Organization (4Cs)
- Part 4 – Goals and Vision for the Future
- Part 5 – Priority Areas for NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan
- All parts completed and uploaded in the portal

Other Documents to Upload in the Portal (or provide to the chair)

- NEASC Opinion survey
- Defined criteria for success (such as rubrics) for the school’s vision of the graduate
- Program of studies
- Bell and daily class schedule
- Master schedule of all classes
- Complete staff list with roles
- Letter of welcome from the principal
- Floor plan of the building
- List of emergency phone numbers (school, local hospital, emergency services, etc.)
- Directions to the school and hotel

Step 3 – Collaborative Conference Visit

A NOTE ON WHAT'S NEW:

- ✓ *The Collaborative Conference Visit is a new step in the Accreditation cycle introduced to help gather information about the school's current conditions and intended to help it apply its Self-Reflection findings to the development of the School Growth/Improvement Plan.*

The purpose of the Collaborative Conference Visit is to gather information about the current conditions of the school, to collaboratively review and refine the school's Self-Reflection findings and the identified Priority Areas for Growth and improvement, and to support the school in the development of its goals for growth. The Collaborative Conference visiting team will also check the school's alignment to the Foundational Elements. The school will be scheduled for a Collaborative Conference Visit in the spring or fall of 2022, depending on its Decennial Accreditation Visit date. Schools will have the opportunity to choose from a window of available time and give input into when their conference is scheduled.

The Collaborative Conference visiting team will work with the school to ensure that the identified goals for growth reflect the Priority Areas that have the greatest impact on student learning and that there are not obvious omissions or other needed improvement areas.

Collaborative Conference Visit Outline

- The Collaborative Conference visit will take two days. The team will consist of 5 visitors. The team will include a chair and assistant chair and 3 other educators representing CPS.
- The first day of the Collaborative Conference Visit will include a school tour, classroom visits, and meetings with representative groups of various stakeholders including the principal, superintendent, school board/committee members, teachers, students, other personnel as requested, and the Self-Reflection committee. The second day will include additional meetings, if necessary, and time for the team to complete its report.
- Costs for the Collaborative Conference Visit (meals, hotel rooms, and travel expenses) will be paid by the school.

Collaborative Conference Report

Once the conference is complete, the Collaborative Conference visiting team will share its report with the school and submit the report to CPS. CPS reviews the information, responds to the school with any additional questions or concerns, and provides feedback as needed. However, the school should begin developing its School Growth/Improvement Plan as soon as the Collaborative Conference Visit is complete.

Schools will be required to release the Collaborative Conference Report to the public within 60 days of receiving it. Ratings for the Foundational Elements will be included in the Collaborative Conference report. Specific feedback and next steps for the Priority Areas for Growth will be given at the time of the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Required Elements of the Collaborative Conference

- Tour of the school building
- Classroom visits (at least 90 minutes)
- Meeting with the Self-Reflection committee* to discuss the Self-Reflection Report
- Meeting with a representative group of students
- Meeting with a representative group of parents
- Meeting with members of the school board/committee
- Meeting with a representative group of teachers
- Meeting with central office administrators
- Meeting with building administrators
- Meeting with department leaders or other school leaders
- Meeting with support staff personnel, such as school counselors, nurse, library/media specialist, and special education personnel

Note: All meetings should be 45 minutes, depending on the school bell schedule. Visitors may be asked to attend different meetings during the same block of time at the discretion of the chair.

*May be selected members of the committee depending on how the school structured the Self-Reflection process.

Sample Collaborative Conference Work Schedule

Day 1

7:30 a.m.	Team arrival at the school
7:45 – 8:15 a.m.	Tour of the building and grounds
8:20 – 9:00 a.m.	Review report with Self-Reflection committee
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.	Observe classes
10:30 – 11:25 a.m.	Meeting with school board/committee/Meeting with support staff
11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Lunch
12:00 – 12:45 p.m.	Meeting with central office administrators/Meeting with teachers
12:50 - 1:50 p.m.	Meeting with parents/Meeting with students
1:55 – 2:40 p.m.	Meet with department heads or other school leaders
2:45 – 3:30 p.m.	Meet with building administrators
3:45 p.m.	Leave school and check in to the hotel
6:00 p.m.	Dinner and evening meeting to debrief findings

Day 2

6:30 a.m.	Breakfast and check out of hotel
7:30 a.m.	Arrival at school
7:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Work on collaborative conference report in team room and other meetings as requested by the chair
12:00 – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Debrief with principal
1:45 p.m.	Depart

Note: The Collaborative Conference schedule will be developed by the chair in consultation with the principal and/or Accreditation Coordinators and will be adjusted based on the school's bell schedule. Team members may split up between scheduled meetings.

Collaborative Conference Visit Checklist

The following checklist should be used by the chair during planning with the school to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized and that all necessary plans for the Collaborative Conference team are in place.

1. The level of understanding of the faculty, staff, students, and community of the Accreditation process and purpose of the Collaborative Conference Visit
2. Completion of all Self-Reflection materials
 - review the Self-Reflection checklist
3. Collection, availability, and access to evidence (through the online portal or hyperlinks to web-based drives and at the school)
4. The Collaborative Conference visit schedule (prepared by the chair)
 - students to lead facility tour
 - meeting of the Self-Reflection committee
 - small group meetings with students, parents, school board/committee, central office administrators, teachers, and leadership team
5. Arrangements for technology use during the visit, including Wi-Fi access and assistance as needed
6. The workroom at the school
 - size, location, and furniture
 - supplies
 - name tags
 - easel with paper and markers
 - a complete master schedule
 - student publications
 - LCD projector, screen, and printer
 - access to a copier and shredder (at the school)
7. Arrangements for lodging and meals as needed
8. Parking at the school
9. Plans for reimbursement of travel expenses
10. An overview of how the Self-Reflection Report was developed
11. Press releases about the visit
12. Distribution of the Collaborative Conference Report

Step 4 – School Growth/Improvement Plan

The purpose of the School Growth/Improvement Plan is for the school to outline a vision for continuous improvement and growth with specific, measurable goals targeting Priority Areas for Growth identified by the school through the Self-Reflection. Schools may use an existing district or state model template for the plan, and it can be similar to or integrated with an existing school improvement plan if it meets the criteria set forth for the NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan.

Elements of the School Growth/Improvement Plan

The School Growth/Improvement Plan (See Appendix for references and sample and the CPS website for a sample template.) is developed using the Priority Areas identified in the Self-Reflection phase and refined based on feedback from the Collaborative Conference Visit. The plan can include other school or district initiatives.

Each goal in the School Growth/Improvement Plan should be evidence-driven, based on identified gaps, growth opportunities, and the school’s desired direction for learning. The plan should clearly demonstrate how the achievement of each goal will impact and improve student learning through increasing alignment with the Standards. The action steps for each goal should be the method(s) designed for creating and communicating informed collaboration to achieve it.

The School Growth/Improvement Plan should include:

- statement of need (what you hope to address)
- measurable goals that can be adjusted after assessment and reflection with at least one goal focused on curriculum, instruction, or assessment, i.e., student learning and aligned with the school district’s strategic plan, if there is one in place
- each goal should include:
 - rationale, including educational research and theory of action (how this will address student need)
 - measures of success/outcomes, including process and impact benchmarks
 - alignment to the NEASC Standards
 - action steps
 - person(s) responsible for each action step
 - timeline
 - budget
 - resources necessary to achieve action steps
 - methods to measure both outputs and outcomes of each goal and the evidence required to show progress on and completion of the goal.

Plan Review and Implementation

The school leaders provide faculty members an opportunity to review and give input on the proposed School Growth/Improvement Plan. The final School Growth/Improvement Plan must also be shared with the superintendent.

When the School Growth/Improvement Plan is complete, the school submits it to the Commission office. The school implements its plan over the next 12–18 months.

Step 5 – School Summary Report for the Decennial Visit

The School Summary Report will be prepared by the school prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit and uploaded to the NEASC online portal. The purpose is to provide updates and additional information related to what has happened at the school since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Components of the School Summary Report

School and Community Summary Section

- Update the School and Community Summary (from the Self-Reflection Report) if necessary and cut and paste it into the online portal
- Update core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate/learning expectations if necessary and cut and paste them into the online portal
- Upload the School Improvement/Growth Plan document created after the Collaborative Conference Visit

Part 1 – Foundational Elements Alignment

- Provide detail on the school’s alignment to the Foundational Elements and identify any changes since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Part 2 – Reflection on Priority Areas

- Report on the progress made in all identified Priority Areas in the School Growth/Improvement Plan from the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit using the Action-Impact-Growth framework.

To analyze progress in each Priority Area for Growth, the school should describe each action that has been undertaken, the status of each action, the impact of each action, and what growth/improvement opportunities each action has revealed.

Describe each of the ACTIONS

- What has been done and who was involved?
- What is the status of each action? Are each of the actions completed, in process, or planned for the future?
- How was progress for each action measured? What evidence was used? How would you rate the success of each action?

Describe the IMPACT of each of the actions

- What impact have the completed actions had toward alignment with the Standards for Accreditation? Have any of the Standards/Principles been impacted?
- What impact have the completed actions had on learning, achievement, and well-being of students?

- What impact do you anticipate the actions, which are in progress or planned for the future, will have on alignment with the Standards for Accreditation or student learning, achievement, or well-being?

Describe the opportunities for growth for each Priority Area

- What are the new opportunities for growth based on the actions and impacts to date?
- What plans may have been made or may need to be made for further growth?

Also, include any evidence that was used to show growth in each of the Priority Areas by uploading it to the portal or linking it to a web-based drive, such as Google Drive.

- Make the presentation of evidence user friendly.
- Organize the evidence by Priority Areas for Growth.
- Use the best representative evidence that supports the work completed to date and supports your explanation of the growth accomplished.
- Use the cover sheet for any student work that supports any of your explanations.

Part 3 – Reflection on the Principles

- Use the Principles of Effective Practice Rubric in the Self-Reflection Guide to rerate any of the Principles in which the rating has changed since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.
- Write a brief explanation describing any changes that occurred and why.

Part 4 – The School as a Learning Organization

- Reflect and write a brief narrative on each of the 4Cs, conceptual understanding, commitment, competency, and capacity, as a useful way to organize reflection on the school’s ongoing and future growth. Consider the following questions in the response:

A learning organization is committed to constant growth, consistently facilitates the learning of its members, and continuously evolves. Schools whose cultures, structures, and processes facilitate ongoing student, adult, and organizational learning are learning organizations.

Conceptual Understanding

- Is there a shared understanding of what optimal or effective learning looks like in the school?
How do you know?

Commitment

- To what extent are members of the school community committed to the school’s vision of the graduate?
- To what extent are members of the school community committed to a growth mindset for students? For adults? For the school?
- To what extent is the school community committed to alignment with the Standards for Accreditation?

Competency

- To what extent does the school community understand and acknowledge the changes that need to be made in order to align with the Standards?

- To what extent do faculty members, staff members, and school and district leaders have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to help students achieve the school’s vision of the graduate?
- What additional professional learning will be required for the school to align with the Standards?

Capacity

- Does the school have the time, resources, and support needed to make progress on its identified priorities?

Part 5 – Planning for the Decennial Visit

- Provide information on any particular areas for the visiting team to review more deeply concerning the current Priority Areas or any areas of growth for the future and suggest any specific areas of focus for the team’s classroom observations.
- Start brainstorming possible visiting team activities aligned to the school’s priorities, such as specific meetings connected to the Priority Areas for Growth, observations of meetings or specific classes, etc.

Step 6 – The Decennial Accreditation Visit

A NOTE ON WHAT'S NEW:

- ✓ *The Decennial Accreditation visiting teams are no longer one size fits all; teams will be tailored to meet the needs of the school and scope of the work to be reviewed.*
- ✓ *The visit is designed to increase focus on classroom work and observing teaching and learning.*
- ✓ *The scope of validated Next Steps and additional recommendations emphasizes feedback on school's Priority Areas for Growth.*

Overarching Principles of the visit

- The primary purpose of the visit will be to determine the school's improvement and growth on its identified priorities, not necessarily improvement on or alignment with every Principle in the Standards.
- The visit will be organized largely based on observing and discussing the school's Priority Areas for Growth.
- The visiting team will employ a growth mindset in meetings, interactions, and debriefs with school personnel.
- The spirit of the visit will be based on trust, inquiry, collaboration, and support.
- The visiting team will place a large emphasis on observing learning and teaching practices through classroom observations and talking with teachers and students about their work.

The visiting team will look for

- any changes in alignment with the Foundational Elements
- progress made implementing the School Improvement/Growth Plan and possible Next Steps regarding the Priority Areas for Growth
- other areas of change or growth that the school has identified and on which it wants feedback
- the school as a learning organization based on the 4Cs framework: Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Capacity, Competency

Required Elements of the Decennial Visit Protocol

School tour – Students conduct a tour of the school for the visiting team. If there is a Priority Area related to facilities, then the or the facilities manager/head custodian should conduct a tour for one or two visiting team members

Overview presentation – The school administrators and Accreditation Coordinators give an overview presentation that explains their journey since the Collaborative Conference Visit, which includes progress on and Next Steps for each Priority Area and the 4Cs, focusing on the school as a learning organization. Time for questions and discussion should be included after the presentation.

Priority Area meetings – Small group meetings to discuss each Priority Area for Growth in depth, involving personnel related to the implementation of each Priority Area.

Priority Area observations – Observations of activities related to each Priority Area, for example, PLC meetings, RTI meetings, advisory sessions, common planning time, etc. Include any activities that authentically relate to each Priority Area and can provide additional insight into how the school has implemented that Priority Area for Growth or the related actions.

Classroom observations – General observations of classroom instruction for two to three hours on Monday and Tuesday for 5-10 minutes in each classroom concurrent with Priority Area blocks. Team members will be looking for evidence of student learning and any areas identified by the school related to the Priority Areas or specific areas identified by the school.

Meeting with a group of students – The team will meet with at least one group of students reflecting the diversity of the student body to discuss student learning in the school.

Meetings with the principal and superintendent – The chair should meet with the principal daily and meet with the superintendent at least once during the visit.

Meeting with the school board/committee – A meeting with the school board/committee, or representatives from the board/committee, should be held to ensure that there is support for the Accreditation process and the school's chosen Priority Areas.

Discussions about student work – The team should have some opportunities to review student work. The review of student work should be organized based on the school's Priority Areas and/or questions for the visiting team. Some suggestions to facilitate this review of student work are:

- teacher conferences – Teachers will be asked to discuss work by reviewing a selection of student work that the teacher chooses with a visiting team member.
- student-led conferences – Students will be asked to bring a portfolio or several pieces of work and sit down with a team member to discuss their work. The meetings should be held in a common space, such as the library/media center. There can be 2-3 students with 1-2 team members.

- review of student work – Samples of student work are curated by the school, organized based on the type(s) of assessment(s) rather than department area(s), to demonstrate alignment to selected Principles of Effective Practice and/or Priority Areas for Growth.

Debrief with the principal – Similar to the Collaborative Conference Visit, the team chair and assistant chair, possibly with the whole team, will sit down with the principal and leadership team to have a closed-door debrief about the visit and the school’s next steps on the Wednesday of the visit.

Chair’s closing remarks – The chair will briefly address the faculty prior to ending the visit on Wednesday after school. This presentation could be a joint one with the chair and the principal.

Optional Elements to Demonstrate Growth in Priority Areas

Constituent group meetings – Meetings with individuals or groups of stakeholders including parents, members of the central office staff, students, and teachers who have specific knowledge related to the Priority Areas.

Survey results – Schools have the option of readministering the NEASC opinion survey or portions of the survey to show growth in Priority Areas at least a month prior to the visit.

Other – Other ideas from the school to demonstrate growth that may be incorporated into the visit.

Decennial Accreditation Visit Checklist

The following checklist should be used by the steering committee to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized.

I. School and Community section

- Update School and Community Summary if necessary and upload it to the Summary report
- Update core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate/learning expectations if necessary and upload it to the Summary Report
- Upload School Improvement/Growth Plan

II. School Summary Report

- Summary Report completed
- School Summary Report reviewed by faculty

III. Other documents to upload to the portal or provide to the chair

- Program of studies
- Bell and daily class schedule
- Letter of welcome from the principal
- Floor plan of the building
- List of emergency phone numbers (school, local hospital, etc.)
- Directions/address for school and hotel

IV. Coordinate with the chair

- Selection of students and/or facilities manager to lead the facility tour(s) on Monday
- Small group meetings or observations connected to Priority Areas
- Classroom visits, teacher and/or student conferences for Monday and Tuesday
- Chair's Preliminary Visit Checklist

Chair's Preliminary Visit prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit

Use this checklist to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized and that all necessary plans for the visiting team are in place.

- _____ The awareness of the faculty, staff, students, and community of the Accreditation process and purpose of the Decennial Accreditation visiting team's report
- _____ Completion of all materials
- _____ Collection, availability, and access to evidence
- _____ Sunday meeting with the school board at the hotel or virtually (unless another time is preferable)
- _____ The visiting team schedule (prepared in collaboration between the school and the chair)
 - selection of students to lead facility tours on Monday (or tour with facilities manager or head custodian)
 - Priority Area meetings
 - Priority Area observations
 - classroom visits
 - looking at student work protocols
 - meeting with students
- _____ Arrangements for technology use during the visit, including any laptops that may be needed, Wi-Fi access, and assistance as needed
- _____ The visiting team workrooms at the school and hotel. Discuss items such as:
 - size, location, and furniture
 - supplies
 - name tags for school
 - easel with paper and markers
 - a complete master schedule available in the school workroom
 - access to the curriculum documents
 - LCD projector (in both locations) and printer (at the school only)
- _____ Arrangements for lodging and meals for members of the visiting team
- _____ Parking at the school or transportation to and from hotel
- _____ Plans for reimbursement of travel expenses (school or NEASC form?)
- _____ An overview of how the Decennial Accreditation Report is developed
- _____ Press releases about the school visit
- _____ The school's responsibility for distribution of the final report
- _____ Press releases about the school visit

Visit Schedule

Sunday

Some members of the visiting team arrive at the hotel between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. (determined by the chair) and receive on-site training. The focus is on ensuring that team members understand team responsibilities and the information that has been sent to them in advance. This training may be done by the chair virtually and team members may arrive Monday morning.

Some members of the visiting team may meet with members of the school board/committee. This meeting can be held in the hotel workroom in the late afternoon at approximately 5:00 p.m. for 45 minutes.

On Sunday evening, the team meets for dinner from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and then works until approximately 9:00 p.m.

Monday and Tuesday

The schedule for Monday and Tuesday of the visit is determined by the school in consultation with the visiting team chair. The goal is for the school to demonstrate its progress on the Priority Areas for Growth through meetings and observations related to each Priority Area. In addition, the team visits classrooms to observe teaching and learning practices.

Required elements of the protocol include:

- school tour
- overview presentation
- Priority area meetings
- Priority area observations
- classroom observations
- meetings with the principal and superintendent
- meeting with the school board/committee
- meeting with students
- discussions about student work
- Debrief with the principal (Wednesday)
- Chair's closing remarks (Wednesday)

Wednesday

Wednesday will include time for the team to finish the report and any necessary paperwork. There will be a brief faculty meeting after school. Prior to the faculty meeting, the team will debrief with the principal and anyone else the principal would like to be present.

The principal and chair should determine, in advance, how the closing remarks will be delivered, for example, a workshop model, looking at Priority Areas and next steps, and/or the principal and chair making remarks together.

Sample Decennial Visit Schedule

Sunday

- 3-4:00 p.m. Team arrival and check-in at hotel (member arrival time determined by the chair)
- 5-5:45 p.m. Meeting with the school committee/board of education
- 6:00 p.m. Team dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Orientation and planning for the visit

Monday

- 7:30 a.m. Team arrival and organizational meeting
- 8:00 a.m. School tour
- 8:45 a.m. Overview presentation
- 9:30 a.m. Block A* - Priority Area meetings and observations
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 12:30 p.m. Block B - Priority Area meetings and observations
- 3:30 p.m. Return to the hotel
- 4:00 p.m. Team work time
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Team discussion and writing time

Tuesday

- 7:30 a.m. Team arrival and organizational meeting
- 8:00 a.m. Block C - Priority Area meetings and observations
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 12:30 p.m. Block D - Priority Area meetings and observations
- 3:30 p.m. Return to the hotel
- 4:00 p.m. Team work time
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Team discussion and writing time

Wednesday

- 7:30 a.m. Team arrival
- 8:00 a.m. Team work time and finishing report
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Debrief with the principal and leadership team
- 2:15 p.m. Closing remarks to the faculty**

*Schedule Priority Area meetings and observations, classroom observations, teacher conferences to discuss work samples. Schedule student conferences during Blocks C or D on Tuesday. Classroom observations that support the Priority Areas should be scheduled in Blocks A or B on Monday.

**Closing remarks can be delivered jointly by the chair and the principal.

The Decennial Accreditation Report

There are several sections to the Decennial Accreditation Report. Keeping in mind what has already been reported on in the Collaborative Conference Report, the newly designed Decennial Accreditation Report seeks to address the progress made by the school since the Collaborative Conference Visit and provides additional information to help the school on its school improvement journey.

Introduction

School and Community Summary

Core Values, Beliefs, Vision of the Graduate/learning expectations

School Improvement Plan

Summary Section

Part 1 – Foundational Elements Reflection

The team provides an update on the Foundational Elements and will confirm or change ratings determined at the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Part 2 – Reflection on Priority Areas

The team provides feedback on each Priority Area for Growth using the action-impact-growth model and suggests next steps or new priorities related to the work that the school has completed so far, including impacts or outcomes of the School Growth/Improvement Plan.

Part 3 – Reflection on Student Learning

The team will provide a reflection on teaching and learning in the school based on classroom observations, meeting with students, and looking at student work. The reflection is based on Principles of Effective Practice 2.4 – 2.9 in the Standards for Accreditation.

Part 4 – Learning Organization Feedback

The team provides feedback on the 4Cs framework: Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Competency, and Capacity in relation to the school as a whole and the Priority Areas for Growth.

Additional information (optional, will vary by school)

The team will provide feedback on any areas the school identified as additional areas to be reviewed during the visit, changes to any ratings of the Principles of Effective Practice as noted by the school, any other areas identified by the team.

Commendations

The team will commend areas where the school is aligned with the Standards

Additional Recommendations

The team may provide additional recommendations based on other elements not in the School Growth/Improvement Plan, which may be potential priorities for the school or areas in which there is room for significant improvement.

Follow-up

Substantive Change Policy

Members of the Visiting Team

Step 7 – Accreditation Decision and Continuous Improvement

Decennial Report

Following the Decennial Accreditation Visit, the visiting team chair sends a draft Decennial Accreditation Report to the principal, who will have a specified amount of time to review the draft and give feedback. Once the Decennial Accreditation Report is finalized, the chair sends the report to the Commission on Public Schools, and a decision about continued Accreditation is made.

Revised School Growth/Improvement Plan

The school develops a new/revised School Growth/Improvement Plan based on the feedback and recommendations from the Decennial Accreditation visiting team. The revised School Growth/Improvement Plan is due to the Commission on Public Schools no later than one year after the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Continuous Improvement and Progress Reports

The process of reflection, planning, and implementation is cyclical and does not end with the Decennial Accreditation Visit. Schools should be actively monitoring evidence, assessing progress, identifying changing priorities or school needs, and adjusting their school plans as necessary for continuous growth and improvement.

Schools will provide updates to the Commission on Public Schools about the implementation of and progress on the revised School Growth/Improvement Plan one, three, and six years after the Decennial Accreditation Visit. More information about the follow-up process and NEASC events and resources will be provided to the school following the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Appendix

Collection of Evidence

Collection of Evidence

Evidence is essential to the Accreditation process. Schools are encouraged to use existing evidence in the Self-Reflection process to be as efficient as possible. Schools that have existing review of student work protocols, classroom observation protocols, professional learning communities, department meetings, and other existing structures are encouraged to use these to facilitate the gathering and analysis of evidence.

Student Work

Student work is essential to the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference process and should be incorporated into the collection of evidence. Student work collected should include:

- Work from each grade level
- Work from each department
- Work from each course level, e.g., developmental, college prep, honors, AP, etc.
- Work which reflects the school's vision of the graduate
- Work which reflects the elements of the Standards (See the Evidence Gathering Worksheet and Look-fors in Classrooms and Student Work.)

The Student Work Set Cover Sheet asks for information which helps the visiting team understand the sets of student work submitted in light of the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate, as well as the local context. Each teacher submitting a set of student work should complete a cover sheet and ensure that each set meets the expectations outlined on the cover sheet.

The teacher's reflection is an important part of the review of student work. The teacher's reflection puts student work into context. In the reflection, teachers should identify the extent to which the student work represents proficiency. In addition, the teacher should consider which of the elements of the Standards for Accreditation is evident in the student work.

Student Work Set Cover Sheet

Teacher / Course / Grade / Level

Type of Assignment (e.g., homework, group work, essay, test, project, etc.)

Skills and Knowledge (e.g., learning expectation, essential question, curriculum standards, etc.)

Describe the activity or assessment and context (or attach unit or lesson plan/overview)

Attach:

1. Handout(s) given to students
2. Assessment criteria, such as a rubric
3. Three examples of student work
 - including work that is developing, meeting, and exceeding expectations
 - scoring and feedback to students

Identify the Learning Look-fors*

Identify the Teaching Look-fors*

*Use the Look-fors list

Reflection

- To what extent does the student work set represent students' proficiency?
- To what extent does the work set reflect elements of the Standards for Accreditation?

Evidence Gathering Worksheet

Context: e.g., student work, observation, interview, meeting.

In the conclusion section describe the principle or descriptors observed

Literal Notes	Conclusions

Look-fors in Classrooms and Student Work

Learning	
<p>skills and competencies necessary to attain the school’s vision of the graduate</p> <p>knowledge, understandings, transferable skills, and dispositions necessary for future success</p> <p>dispositions, such as independence, flexible thinking, and persistence</p> <p>disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge</p> <p>deep understanding</p> <p>higher order thinking</p> <p>inquiry</p> <p>application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks</p>	<p>questioning, analysis, and understanding impacts</p> <p>analysis, synthesis, creativity, making connections, and understanding relationships</p> <p>critical and creative thinking</p> <p>using technology in informed, effective, and ethical ways</p> <p>communicate clearly and creatively</p> <p>construct knowledge</p> <p>create</p> <p>problem-solve</p> <p>share work with an audience</p> <p>collaboration</p>
Teaching	
<p>interdisciplinary learning, project-based learning, and authentic learning experiences</p> <p>strategic differentiating and individualizing</p> <p>purposefully organized group learning</p> <p>connections to prior knowledge across disciplines</p> <p>additional support and alternative strategies</p> <p>organizational, grouping, and tiered intervention strategies</p> <p>learning that is personalized, relevant, and authentic</p> <p>opportunities for students to determine learning outcomes, set goals and reflect upon the results</p> <p>student discourse and reflection on learning</p> <p>student choice, pursuit of personal interests, and opportunities for creative expression</p> <p>opportunities to learn in and out of school</p> <p>experiences that are cognitively challenging</p> <p>a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative, summative assessments, and common assessments</p> <p>specific and measurable criteria for success provided to learners prior to assessments</p>	<p>regular and consistent checks for understanding</p> <p>presentation of learning to authentic audiences</p> <p>multiple and varied opportunities over time to demonstrate learning</p> <p>consistent, systematic, specific, and timely corrective feedback</p> <p>opportunities to revise and improve work</p> <p>teacher feedback as well as peer feedback and self-reflection</p> <p>separate grading/reporting and feedback for work habits and academic skills</p> <p>technology to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access, support, document, and supplement learning ○ broaden perspectives locally and globally ○ personalize the pace of learning ○ share work with an audience beyond the school community ○ collaborate digitally to support learning ○ engage in learning beyond the constraints of the school building and school day

Sample School and Community Summary

Bristol High School, located in Bristol, Maine, serves the communities of Bristol, Oyster Bay, and Rockport. Located equidistant from Portland and Augusta, the towns are traditional seacoast communities, with tourism and fishing as primary industries.

With a combined population of 17,230, the communities are economically, racially, culturally, and ethnically similar. No identifiable minority group comprises more than 0.7 percent of the population, and English is the primary language spoken by 99 percent of the student population; a few students have parents who speak Portuguese at home. Bristol has the slightly larger population with 7,629, with Oyster Bay (5,012) and Rockport (4,589) somewhat smaller. The median family income is \$53,309 in Bristol, \$63,044 in Oyster Bay, and \$60,412 in Rockport.

The majority of the population in all three communities is employed in the fishing industry, tourism, services, trade, and government. In 2011, the unemployment rate was 3.9 percent for Bristol, 4.5 percent for Oyster Bay, and 3.8 percent for Rockport. In 2011, five percent of the school population lived below the low-income level. Seacoast College, also located in Bristol, is a major employer for all three towns. Rockport is also home to Genetics Corporation, a biotechnical research company, and Oyster Bay is home to two assisted living facilities. All three towns have experienced considerable growth in the past five years. While there has been a slight decline in the fishing industry, at the same time new housing starts, primarily due to the building of second/vacation homes, have increased.

In addition to Bristol High School with a population of 988, Littleneck Middle School includes 740 students, and three elementary schools, one located in each of the three communities, house 559, 341, and 287 students for a total of 2,915 in the Barnacle Bay School District. Eighteen students, 2 percent, attend non-public schools.

The Bristol School District is ranked in the lower 30 percent of school districts in the state in terms of per pupil expenditures and expended \$8,443 per pupil compared to a state average expenditure of \$9,022 per pupil in 2010-2011 and \$8,678 compared to a state average expenditure of \$9,216 per pupil in 2010-2011. In FY 2011 state, federal, and other resources accounted for 62 percent of all funds received in the district, leaving 38 percent of funding to be obtained through local resources. Forty-seven percent of local property taxes are allocated to the public schools. Twelve students paid nonresident tuition fees of \$7,500 each to attend Bristol High School in both 2010 and 2011.

Bristol High School includes students in grade 9 -12 with the total enrollment of 988 students divided between 490 males and 498 females. The school population has remained stable over the past ten years. The ethnic, racial, and cultural composition has remained constant with .43 percent (4) African American students, .17 percent (2) Asian students, and 1.2 percent (10) Hispanic students during the 2011-2012 school year. The average dropout rate for the past two years has been 2.15 percent, the average daily student attendance 96.7 percent and the average attendance rate among teachers is 96.2 percent.

There are 62 teachers at Bristol High School, creating a ratio of 16:1. Individual teachers carry an average load of 80 students with an average class size of 19. In those classes required for graduation,

the average class size is 22 students. Students attend school for 180 days and for a minimum of 975 hours.

All freshmen are placed in non-leveled teams concentrating on four core academic areas of English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Students in grades ten to twelve may select from three levels of college preparatory, honors, or Advanced Placement (where offered). Sixty-seven percent of students are enrolled in honors classes, 20 percent in college preparatory courses, and 12 percent in Advanced Placement courses. Approximately 7 percent of students receive special education services. Bristol High School offers a variety of co-curricular activities for its students in which over 93 percent of students every year participate in at least one co-curricular activity.

In the class of 2012, 67 percent of graduates attended four-year colleges, with 13 percent enrolling in two-year colleges, 4.3 percent enrolling in business and technical schools, 11 percent entering the workforce, and 4.4 percent entering the military. Graduates take advantage of the considerable educational opportunities available as they choose from such colleges and universities as Rockport College, Coastal College, Mystic River University, and Seacoast School of Design. Opportunities for adult continuing education are available at Bristol Adult Learning Center, Bristol Community College, and Salty Creek Regional Technical School.

Bristol High School has established partnerships with local businesses, including an annual career day program in which every tenth-grade student spends a day at a local business in a job shadowing experience; numerous food drives and fundraising events for local charities; blood drives and walks for hunger; performances by music groups at hospitals and for the elderly. Juniors and seniors experience extended work experience through courses offered where students serve as interns at local businesses.

Bristol High School has also established effective partnerships with three of the local institutions of higher education. Juniors and seniors may enroll in one college course for credit each year at no cost to the student. Through grant monies the high school's guidance counselors and admissions office staff at Coastal College are working collaboratively to increase the number of students applying to colleges and universities. Over the past few years, a significant number of intern teachers from Mystic River University have been working at the high school.

Students are recognized for their accomplishments through the superintendent's and principal's awards, given annually to students in each grade level; the Tri-Community Exchange Club which recognizes most improved students on a monthly basis; a First Honors Dinner, sponsored by parent-teacher association (PTA) to recognize those students who have attained first honors for the four terms during the previous year. In addition, local newspapers sponsor academic and athletic achievement awards and speech contests in addition to many locally sponsored scholarships. Each spring the school honors students from all spectra in awards assemblies recognizing individual student achievement in academics, music, drama, athletics, and community service.

Resources for School Growth/Improvement Plans

References for School Growth/Improvement Plan

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Sample School Improvement/Growth Plans and Templates

NEASC CPS Growth Plan Template. Retrieved January 2019 from https://cpss.neasc.org/sites/cpss.neasc.org/files/Downloads_doc/School%20Growth%20Plan%20Template.docx

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News Release
Seeking Community Participation During Accreditation

COMMUNITY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN ACCREDITATION OF SCHOOL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The principal _____ of _____ School invites parents of students and other interested community residents to assist in a Self-Reflection which is currently being conducted by the school’s professional staff.

The Self-Reflection is a significant component in the Accreditation process of the Commission on Public Schools for the Accreditation of _____ School by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. _____ (Principal) noted that all aspects of the school will be assessed during the Self-Reflection. Volunteers are needed to serve on the Self-Reflection committee, which will assess the school’s alignment to the Standards for Accreditation.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is a voluntary membership organization of more than 2,000 public schools, colleges and universities, independent schools, and vocational/technical and career institutions. Approximately 725 public schools throughout New England are currently accredited through the Association's Commission on Public Schools. The Commission works with individual schools to improve the quality of their programs at all levels through a process of Self-Reflection, peer review, and ongoing monitoring.

Anyone interested in volunteering time or in learning more about the Self-Reflection should contact _____, who is coordinating the Accreditation process at the school. He/she may be reached at _____ during school hours.



For more information contact:

Person	_____
School	_____
City/State/Zip	_____
Email	_____
Telephone	_____
Date	_____

News Release

Staff Visit from the Commission on Public Schools

_____ **SCHOOL TO SEEK NEASC ACCREDITATION**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

_____ (School) _____'s faculty members met on (day) _____, _____ to listen to strategies on preparing for the school's Self-Reflection offered by a staff member from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. _____ (name) _____, (title) _____, for the Association's Commission on Public Schools, provided the faculty with an overall picture of the Commission's Accreditation procedures and Standards for Accreditation during the hour-long session.

_____ noted that the New England Association is a voluntary accrediting agency of more than 2,000 public and independent schools, and vocational, technical, and career institutions. Of these, approximately 725 schools are accredited through the Association's Commission on Public Schools. The Commission works with individual schools to improve the quality of education through a continuous process of evaluation and Accreditation.

Principal/Headmaster _____ said, "To become a member of NEASC, a school must align with the Standards for Accreditation. The purpose of the Self-Reflection is to provide an opportunity for our professional staff to review all our educational programs, processes, systems, and practices to determine the degree to which our school aligns with those rigorous Standards. The Standards were established to ensure that the necessary components for effective education exist within the school. _____ also noted that, "While Accreditation by the Association does not imply perfection, it does ensure that the school has the resources, leadership, and organization necessary to support the ongoing improvement required of all schools."

One of the major requirements for NEASC membership is that the entire school be assessed following the extensive Self-Reflection by the professional staff. This assessment is conducted by visiting teams of professional educators, sent by the Commission, who review all materials prepared by the faculty in the Self-Reflection, visit classes, and talk with students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members during their four-day visit to the school. _____ School has been scheduled for visits at the conclusion of the Self-Reflection and again on _____, 2024.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, founded in 1885, is the oldest accrediting agency in the country and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the sole agency to award Accreditation to PreK-12 schools, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in New England.



For more information contact:

Person	_____
School	_____
City/State/Zip	_____
Email	_____
Telephone	_____
Date	_____

News Release - The Collaborative Conference Visit Conducted by the Commission on Public Schools

COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE VISIT TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

_____(Number)____ educators will conduct an on-site Collaborative Conference Visit with _____ School on _____ through _____. Principal/Headmaster _____ announced today. The Collaborative Conference Visit will be conducted under the direction of the Commission on Public Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The Collaborative Conference visiting team will be chaired by _____, (title) _____, _____ (institution) _____. Dr. /Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. _____ has had extensive experience in the Association's Accreditation process.

Principal/Headmaster _____ said, "The purpose of this Collaborative Conference is to review and determine from an outside professional viewpoint the extent to which the school is aligned to the Standards for Accreditation and identify Priority Areas for Growth and improvement. As part of the Conference, the team will meet with school constituents, review the school's Self-Reflection, visit a number of classes, and examine examples of student work submitted by the school. During the comprehensive Self-Reflection, the faculty attempted to identify the school's strengths and determined those areas in which changes would be beneficial."

The chair of the Collaborative Conference visiting team, _____, said, "Our purpose in visiting _____ School is to assist the faculty in its pursuit of quality education for its students." Principal/Headmaster _____ pointed out, "The members of the team are contributing their services to the school. This spirit of professional collaboration is one of the noted features of the New England Association. The goal of an Accreditation visit is to stimulate a continuing drive for improvement in the school." The members of the team are teachers and administrators from a variety of schools in the _____ (state) _____ area.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is a voluntary membership organization of more than 2,000 public schools, independent schools, and vocational, technical, and career institutions. Of these, over 725 schools have been accredited through the Association's Commission on Public Schools. The Commission works with individual public schools to improve the quality of education through a continuous process of Accreditation and ongoing monitoring.



For more information contact:

Person _____
School _____
City/State/Zip _____
Telephone _____
Date _____

News Release - The Decennial Accreditation Visit Conducted
by the Commission on Public Schools

DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION VISIT TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

_____(Number)____ educators will conduct an on-site Initial or Decennial Accreditation Visit of _____ School on _____ through _____. Principal/Headmaster _____ announced today. The Accreditation visit will be conducted under the direction of the Commission on Public Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The visiting team will be chaired by _____, (Title) _____, (Institution) _____. Dr. /Mr. /Mrs. /Ms. _____ has had extensive experience in the Association’s Accreditation process.

Principal/Headmaster _____ said, "The purpose of this Accreditation visit is to review and determine from an outside professional viewpoint the extent to which the school is aligned with the Standards for Accreditation. As part of the assessment, the visiting team will meet with all school constituents, review the school’s Self-Reflection, visit a number of classes, and examine examples of student work submitted by the school. During the comprehensive Self-Reflection, the faculty attempted to identify the school's strengths and determined those areas in which changes would be beneficial."

The chair of the visiting team, _____, said, "Our purpose in visiting _____ School is to assist the faculty in its pursuit of quality education for its students." Principal/Headmaster _____ pointed out, "The members of the visiting team are contributing their services to the school. This spirit of professional collaboration is one of the noted features of the New England Association. The goal of an Accreditation visit is to stimulate a continuing drive for improvement in the school." The members of the visiting team are teachers and administrators from a variety of schools in the _____ (state) _____ area.

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Date _____

News Release
The Accreditation Decision

COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAKES ACCREDITATION DECISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Officials of _____ School were notified today that the Commission on Public Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges has voted to continue/grant _____ school's Initial or Continued Accreditation in the Association. The Commission's decision was based upon review of a Decennial Accreditation report prepared by a visiting team in _____ (month) _____.

_____, principal of _____ School, stated: "We feel that the Commission's decision confirms the results of the extensive Self-Reflection, which our faculty and administrators conducted. We are convinced that the findings of our Self-Reflection, coupled with recommendations of the Commission on Public Schools' visiting team, will assist us in developing priorities for further improvements in the school.

"The Commission on Public Schools requires that accredited schools submit progress reports following the Decennial Accreditation Visit to indicate the changes we've made to improve our school. In anticipation of these progress reports, the professional staff and administrators will immediately begin a follow-up program to review the findings of the visiting team report to establish the order in which recommendations will be carried out."

The New England Association of School and Colleges is a voluntary membership organization of more than 2,000 public and independent schools and vocational, technical, and career institutions. Of these, approximately 725 schools have been accredited through the Association's Commission on Public Schools. The Association works with individual schools to improve the quality of education through a continuous process of evaluation and Accreditation.



For more information contact:

Person _____
School _____
City/State/Zip _____
Telephone _____
Date _____

Substantive Change Policy

New England Association of Schools & Colleges

Commission on Public Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has an impact on the school's ability to align with any of the Standards for Accreditation. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact on the school's ability to align with the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be substantive changes which must be reported:

- elimination of fine arts, practical arts, and student activities
- diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities
- significantly decreased funding
- cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing
- cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support staff
- decreases in student services
- cuts in the educational media staffing
- increases in student enrollment that cannot be accommodated
- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees
- changes in the student population that warrant program or staffing modification(s) that cannot be accommodated, e.g., the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency.

Glossary

Accreditation Coordinators

Working with the principal, the Accreditation Coordinators are responsible for leading the Accreditation process with the support of the steering committee. Ideally, the Accreditation Coordinators guide the process from the Self-Reflection through the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Collaborative Conference Report

The Collaborative Conference Report will summarize the school's alignment to each of the Standards for Accreditation, provide commendations and recommendations, and ensure that the identified goals for growth reflect the Priority Areas that have the greatest impact on student learning and that there are not obvious omissions or other needed improvement areas.

Collaborative Conference Visit

The purpose of the Collaborative Conference Visit is to gather information about the current conditions of the school; to collaboratively review and refine the school's Self-Reflection findings and the identified Priority Areas for Growth and improvement; and to support the school in the development of its goals for growth.

Decennial Accreditation Report

The Decennial Accreditation Report will summarize the school's alignment to each of the Principles in the Standards for Accreditation and implementation of the School Growth/Improvement Plan. The report will provide the school with commendations and recommendations to guide the revision of the School Growth/Improvement Plan and help the school further align to the Standards for Accreditation over the next 3-6 years.

Decennial Accreditation Visit

The Decennial Accreditation Visit is an opportunity for the visiting team to assess the school's progress on the implementation of the School Growth/Improvement Plan and their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. The purpose of the Decennial Accreditation Visit is to assess how the implementation of the School Growth/Improvement Plan is proceeding and to be present for and observe firsthand the day-to-day workings of the school.

Descriptor

The Descriptors of Effective Practice serve as guidance for schools to identify the common elements of successful implementation of each Principle in the Standards for Accreditation. The Descriptors are neither exhaustive nor required. The Descriptors provide a template for aligning to the Principles. Schools may choose to use different, equally valid, paths to aligning with the Principles.

Dispositions

Dispositions are the patterns of behavior and thinking necessary for success in and out of school. Dispositions include persistence, flexibility, empathy, courage, and accuracy, for example.

Foundational Elements

The Foundational Elements are the most basic conditions necessary for alignment to the Standards for Accreditation. Each Foundational Element is drawn from one of the Principles in the Standards. These elements must be in place for a school to meet the needs of students. If any Foundational Element is not fully implemented, the school must include it as a "Priority Area for Growth" in the School Growth/Improvement Plan

School Growth/Improvement Plan

The School Growth/Improvement Plan is the outline of a vision for continuous improvement and growth with specific, measurable goals and action plans targeting Priority Areas identified by the school through the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference.

Learning Organization

A learning organization consistently facilitates and prioritizes the learning of its members and is continuously evolving. Schools whose cultures, structures and processes facilitate ongoing student, adult and organizational learning are working toward becoming learning organizations.

Principle of Effective Practice (Principle)

The Principles of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation express the essential values, concepts, practices, and structures used to guide evaluation of the quality of school programs, services, and commitments.

Priority Area for Growth (Priority Area)

The Priority Areas for Growth are the areas reflecting the NEASC Standards that the school needs to strengthen or better align to improve learning, achievement, and well-being for students. The Priority Areas for Growth should reflect school and district priorities that the school is working on and wants to focus attention on further.

Self-Reflection Committee

The Self-Reflection committee is charged with completing the Self-Reflection report to determine the school's level of alignment with each of the Principles of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation, the school's growth as a learning organization, and identify Priority Areas for Growth. The committee follows a process of evidence gathering, discussion, decision-making, and writing. The Self-Reflection committee is expected to engage the entire school community in the process including all educators, students, families, and other stakeholder groups.

Self-Reflection Report

The school's Self-Reflection report is written by the Self-Reflection committee and includes five parts: Look Back, Current Conditions, the School as a Learning Organization, Goals and Vision for the Future, and Priority Areas for NEASC School Growth/Improvement Plan. The School Self-Reflection report is the basis for the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Steering Committee

The steering committee is charged with providing leadership for the Accreditation process. The steering committee must include the school principal, or designated school administrator, and a minimum of two educators from the professional staff who serve as Accreditation Coordinators. Additional members may be included to provide sufficient capacity for the committee to lead all aspects of the Accreditation process.

School Summary Report

The School Summary Report will be completed by the school prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit and includes eight parts: School and Community Summary, Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate, update on the status of the school's alignment to the Foundation Elements, update on the status of the school's progress on its Priority Areas for Growth, changes in the school's ratings on the Principles of Effective Practice since the Collaborative Conference, Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization (4Cs), Planning for the Decennial Visit, and updated School Growth/Improvement Plan.

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are the essential skills students need to be able to confront new challenges both in and outside of school. Transferable skills include creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, for example.

Vision of the Graduate

The vision of the graduate includes the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success.