



Policy, Procedures, and Guidelines Manual

NEASC Commission on Public Schools

for public schools, districts, centers, and programs

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Mission

NEASC Mission

NEASC partners with schools to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices.

NEASC Goals

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges aspires to provide a process for meaningful, ongoing whole-school improvement and growth while honoring the unique culture and context of each institution we support.

In this spirit, NEASC:

- encourages the pursuit of a unique mission in distinctive circumstances by each member
- advocates for thoughtful self-reflection guided by objective peer review
- promotes public recognition of the challenges that accredited institutions face both in common and in particular
- elucidates the value, philosophy, and practice of accreditation for our member schools, the public, legislative bodies, and governing boards
- assists member schools in navigating accreditation in a context often dictated by federal, state, or local mandates and by limited means.

Commission on Public Schools Statement

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools, in partnership with its members, strives to ensure that all students experience an equitable, high-quality education necessary for their future success and well-being.

We will accomplish this mission through a cycle of continuous improvement and growth that includes:

- quality, research based, Standards for Accreditation
- an inclusive, collaborative process of Accreditation
- an inquiry-based process of Self-Reflection
- valid and reliable feedback and assessment through peer review ongoing monitoring and professional support

NEASC Policies and Bylaws

NEASC-wide policies and bylaws can be found by going to neasc.org/policies to find the following items not addressed herein, such as:

- Appeal of Adverse Action
- Bylaws of the Association
- Complaints Against NEASC-affiliated Institutions
- GDPR Privacy Statement
- Privacy Statement
- Release of Information by Schools

Child Protection Requirements for Schools

While NEASC recognizes and celebrates the unique nature of each member school through a variety of Standards and approaches to accreditation, there are some areas that have standardized importance across all schools — one of which is the safety and well-being of children.

NEASC believes that: everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children; all schools have a duty of care to children enrolled in the school and those who are affected by the operations of the school; and all actions on child protection are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.

As such, we support an ethos of protection for all our schools and partners and commit to this work through the upholding of accreditation requirements related to best practices in child protection, and by providing resources for schools to strengthen their work in this area. NEASC Accredited schools are required to demonstrate that their current policies, procedures, and personnel protect the health and safety of students and other community members. Schools are expected to meet the following requirements to achieve and maintain NEASC Accreditation:

1. comprehensive due diligence in screening and hiring including background and reference checks
2. documented policies and procedures that ensure the safety and welfare of all students
3. appropriate and clearly outlined response if children are harmed, at risk of harm, or if allegations of harm to children are made
4. clearly defined leadership responsibilities for child safety and reporting
5. child protection training for all adults who work with students
6. child protection, including online safety, is included in the formal learning program for students
7. clear codes of conduct govern appropriate and acceptable behaviors for adult interactions with children and children's interaction with other children

8. compliance with the legal, ethical, and cultural expectations and requirements regarding child abuse within the jurisdiction in which the school operates

Some school types may have additional child protection standards or indicators from NEASC that offer further guidance and requirements in areas unique to their school type or program, such as boarding programs, or schools located outside the United States which do not fall under US state requirements.

NEASC is a proud participant in the [International Task Force for Child Protection \(ITFCP\)](#) new standards for child protection. NEASC has also convened conversations around this topic with groups of public and private schools in the New England region and takes into account state requirements in the New England region (ME, MA, VT, NH, CT, RI) as well as the National Association of Independent Schools report on this topic. The above NEASC requirements were developed taking these reports and resources into account. Additional resources related to institutional child protection programs may be found at the [International Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(ICMEC\) Education Portal](#).

Release of Information by NEASC

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, in recognition of its responsibility to affiliated institutions, governmental agencies, and the general public to make readily available accurate, fair and pertinent information about the accreditation status of its members and candidate institutions, maintains online directories of member and candidate schools. The specific information provided relates to school data and Commission actions.

The following information is periodically made available by NEASC:

1. actions taken by NEASC granting candidacy for accreditation or initial accreditation
2. adverse actions (i.e., denial of candidacy for accreditation, termination of candidacy for accreditation, denial of accreditation, placement on probation or termination of accreditation) taken by NEASC after the right of appeal has been exhausted.
 - In these cases, the effective date of and the reasons for the action are also released. In addition, for institutions placed on probation, the relevant Commission's plans to monitor the institution are stated.

In addition, a Commission may elect to publish and disseminate information regarding the last and/or upcoming date(s) of review of an Accredited or Candidate institution.

Volunteer Policy

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is a voluntary association that depends on its membership to identify volunteers to conduct peer review. Accordingly, it is an expectation of membership that member institutions identify highly qualified volunteers annually. Each

institution's Commission determines the specific number of volunteers to be identified and may vary from Commission to Commission due to the varying sizes of visiting teams. Member institutions will be reminded periodically that providing and supporting volunteers is a condition of membership.

NEASC Membership

There shall be three classes of membership:

1. accredited schools
2. programs
3. other legal entities approved by the NEASC Board of Trustees

Entities and programs eligible for membership in the Association shall be those entities and programs approved by the respective Commission or the Board of Trustees as appropriate. The Board of Trustees shall announce the names of newly approved members at the next regular or special meeting of the Association.

Commission on Public Schools Procedures

Scope of Responsibility and Actions

The Commission on Public Schools, on behalf of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, shall have overall responsibility for matters that relate to the accreditation of institutions served by the NEASC Mission.

The Commission's scope of responsibility extends to the following actions:

- awarding, denial, deferral, or termination of Candidacy for Accreditation
- awarding, deferral, or denial of Initial Accreditation
- granting or deferral of Continued Accreditation
- acceptance, rejection, or deferral of action on accreditation and progress reports
- request special progress reports
- take appropriate action on reports of substantive change
- placement of school on warning or probation
- removal of school from warning or probation
- request a show cause letter for probation or termination
- termination of accreditation

Additionally, in consultation with the Director, Commission members will:

- hear and discuss reports provided by the Director and other staff members
- review reports submitted on behalf of the Commission by visiting team chairs
- make decisions with respect to a school's accredited status
- develop, review, and revise Commission policies and guidelines
- participate in discussions about the Commission's strategic direction
- participate in training and development workshops
- participate in or lead at least one Accreditation visit per school year

Commission Membership and Composition

The Commission on Public Schools membership shall be drawn from the New England states and comprise administrators and faculty members from member schools and other professionals approved by the Board of Trustees. Commission members shall represent, through current or past expertise and experience, public schools, districts, centers, and programs accredited by the Commission. The Commission shall have a diverse membership with at least one member from

each of the six New England states. In addition, the Commission shall have at least one educational partner who has not been an active full-time educator for the previous year and is not currently employed full-time with a member school.

The Commission will be composed of 35 professionals, distributed as follows:

- 24 school- or district-level administrators
- 6 teachers or other educational professionals
- 5 educational partners

Sub-Committees of the Commission

Standing sub-committees of the Commission are the Leadership Committee, Nominating Committee, and Review Committees. Ad hoc committees may also be appointed by the Commission Chair or Director.

Nominating Committee

Composition of the Nominating Committee:

- The Chair of the Commission shall appoint annually a Nominating Committee of seven Commission members, one from each state and one to serve as the Nominating Committee Chair

Duties of the Nominating Committee are to:

- review letters of interest and credentials of applicants from member schools and educational partners from the New England Region
- present selected nominees for the Commission's consideration for approval

Nomination, Election, and Appointment

Openings on the Commission can be made public and announced to member schools to seek nominations or prospective members can be nominated by current Commission members; the Commission Chair, Chair-Elect, Immediate Past Chair; Commission Directors; the NEASC Chief Accreditation Officer; or the NEASC President/CEO. Additionally, member school principals may nominate prospective Commission members, or they may self-nominate. The Nominating Committee initially reviews nominations to bring forward for a vote by the entire Commission. The appointment of Commission members requires the joint consent of the members of the Commission, Commission Chair, Director of the Commission, NEASC President/CEO, and Board of Trustees.

Commission members may serve two three-year terms. No person may serve more than six

consecutive years as a Commission member. However, this restriction may be waived for up to a maximum of four years for a Commission member serving as Chair, Chair-Elect, or Immediate Past Chair of the Commission. In any year in which more than 40 percent of the Commission membership has terms expiring, the Commission shall create varying terms in such a way as to restore a rotation system in which no more than 40 percent of the terms expire in one year.

Vacancies

When the position of a Commission member becomes vacant, the Nominating Committee brings replacement nominations forward for a vote by the entire Commission. The appointment of Commission members requires the joint consent of the members of the Commission, the Commission Chair, Director of the Commission, NEASC President/CEO, and Board of Trustees. A successor filling such vacancy shall serve a three-year term from the date of Board approval and shall be eligible for an additional three-year term.

Terms of Commission Members Who Change Schools or Positions

Should a Commission member change positions within a school or school system or move to another member school or member school system, that individual may complete his or her term. This condition does not apply to those Commission members serving as educational partners.

Commission Meetings

The Commission holds three meetings annually in March, June, and October, open only to Commission members, Association officers and staff, and invited guests. The dates for each calendar year are approved at the Commission's October meeting.

Attendance and Participation in the Work of the Commission

Attendance at Commission meetings is imperative since each Commission member will be assigned specific responsibilities as a resource person for reports to be reviewed by the Commission. A Commission member who is absent or has not fulfilled the responsibilities and duties of Commission members for more than two meetings in one year may be removed from serving the rest of the term at the discretion of the Director.

Quorum and Manner of Acting

For the Commission to act on business at Commission meetings, there shall be a quorum of two-thirds of the Commission membership. The act of the majority of the Commission members present at a Commission meeting at which a quorum is present when the vote is taken shall be the act of the Commission unless the act or the NEASC Bylaws requires a greater percentage.

Should a quorum not be present, fewer Commission members may adjourn the meeting to

reconvene at another time.

Virtual and Hybrid Meetings

Commission members may participate in a regular or special meeting by, or conduct the meeting using, any means of synchronous communication by which all members participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. A Commission member participating in a meeting by this means is deemed to be present at the meeting. This also applies to hybrid meetings for which some members are present in person while others attend remotely.

Conflict of Interest

NEASC expects that members of its Commissions will perform their duties in good faith and in the organization's best interests. Similarly, it is expected that Commission members will exercise good judgment in their private activities that may reflect on or affect NEASC. Commission members have an obligation to avoid activities, agreements, business investments or interests, or other situations that could be construed either in conflict with the interests of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges or as an interference with their duty to serve NEASC to the best of their ability.

Commission members hold a unique responsibility within NEASC as they uphold NEASC Standards for Accreditation with its membership. Commission members must be mindful of personal and professional relationships with schools that might impair or appear to impair objectivity. At any Commission meeting, if a member believes he or she may have a potential conflict on a given matter, the member should cite the agenda item and recuse himself or herself prior to any consideration by the Commission on the matter.

The NEASC Conflict of Interest policies apply to all Commission members. An annual disclosure form will be required of all Commission members, and new members will complete their first disclosure form within two months of their election.

Removal

Any Commission member may be removed from office by the Board of Trustees at any time, with or without cause, by a vote of a majority of the Trustees (See also Attendance and Participation in the Work of the Commission section above.). If a Commission member is removed, the Commission may not re-elect the removed member. Any Commission member may be suspended by the Board of Trustees' Executive Committee at any time, with or without cause, by a majority vote of such committee. Such suspension/removal shall be without prejudice to the contract rights, if any, of the person so removed/suspended. Appointment as an officer or agent shall not of itself create contract rights.

Responsibilities and Duties of Commission Members

The Commission members meet regularly throughout the year to review progress reports and accreditation reports submitted by and about member schools and provide commendations and recommendations specific to each school in the context of the Standards for Accreditation. This feedback serves as a roadmap for individualized and ongoing school growth and improvement for student learning. In addition, Commission members collectively determine the accreditation status of each member school.

The Commission Director and Chair assign Commission members to Review Committees that comprise several members, including a Review Committee Chair.

Review Committee Chairs are to:

- oversee the review of evaluation and progress reports by resource members of the Review Committee
- solicit comments about the reports from all Review Committee members, stressing the school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation
- take votes on Commission actions and accreditation recommendations
- serve on the Leadership Committee

Review Committee members are to:

- study in detail all reports assigned to the Review Committee, noting Priority Areas for Growth action steps, recommendations, and commendations which might be included in the Commission notification letter.
- highlight the most important aspects of assigned accreditation reports, progress reports, reports of substantive change, and summaries, stressing the strengths and areas for growth of the school
- note the degree of alignment with the Foundational Elements and the implementation of Priority Area goals, next steps, and recommendations as indicated in assigned accreditation and progress reports

Abstention from Voting

In accordance with the above Conflict of Interest section, during Commission meetings and Review Committee meetings, no Commission member shall vote on or participate in the discussion of matters affecting any institution in a school district or supervisory union in which the member has a professional affiliation. In other instances where a conflict of interest might exist, the Commission members shall exercise appropriate discretion.

Commission Officers – Election and Succession

The Commission shall nominate its own Chair and Chair-Elect from among its Commission members, subject to confirmation by the NEASC Board of Trustees. The Commission will consider a rotation of New England state representation in its deliberations for the election of the Chair and Chair-Elect. A Chair-Elect shall be elected to serve a one-year term coterminous with the second year of the Chair's two-year term. The Chair-Elect will serve as the Immediate Past Chair for one year at the end of the Chair-Elect's two-year term as Chair. The Chair-Elect or the Immediate Past Chair shall succeed to the office of Chair in the event of a vacancy or act as Chair in the event of an absence.

Duties of the Chair, Chair-Elect, and Immediate Past Chair of the Commission

The Chair's duties are to:

- prepare with the Director of the Commission the agenda for Commission meetings
- preside over Commission meetings
- present the Chair's Report at Commission meetings
- chair the Leadership Committee
- appoint ad hoc and standing committees
- make decisions on issues that require action between Commission meetings
- represent the Commission, together with the Director, at meetings of the NEASC Board of Trustees

The Chair-Elect's duties are to:

- prepare for assuming the role of chair once the Chair's term expires or if the Chair no longer serves in that capacity for any other reason
- preside over Commission meetings in the Chair's stead if the chair is unavailable
- serve in the chair's stead for other committees and boards if the chair is unavailable
- serve on the Leadership Committee

The Immediate Past Chair's duties are to:

- assume the role of chair if the Chair no longer serves in that capacity and if the Chair-Elect is unavailable
- preside over Commission meetings in the Chair's stead if the Chair and Chair-Elect are unavailable

- serve in the Chair's stead for other committees and boards if the Chair and Chair-Elect are unavailable
- serve on the Leadership Committee

Parliamentary Authority

Commission Meetings are conducted per parliamentary procedure as delineated in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

Member Information

Maintenance of School Records

The Commission will retain all records, reports, and communications relating to each member school since its last decennial accreditation visit.

School Data

The following information is published in the [School/Member Directory](#) maintained on the NEASC website:

- name and location of member and candidate schools
- date of initial accreditation and/or last visit
- grade range served by the school
- any probationary status

Policies and Procedures for Schools

Ethical Practices

Schools accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges are expected to operate in the public interest and in accordance with ethical practices with respect to the rights, responsibilities, health, and safety of all students, faculty, administrators, school board/committee members, and all others associated with the school. (See also sections on termination of accreditation and unethical practices in member schools.)

School Membership

Public schools seeking membership in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges agree to the following before beginning the accreditation process:

- commit to meeting the NEASC Standards for Accreditation
- commit to a process of self-reflection, peer review, and ongoing systematic improvement, utilizing NEASC Standards
- participate in all training elements of the accreditation protocol, including the accreditation seminar, liaison training visit, decennial visit seminar, and follow-up seminar
- engage in a Self-Reflection process and submit a high-quality Self-Reflection report.
- host accreditation visits, and special visits as required by NEASC, including any Commission directed visits
- have high-quality guiding documents, e.g., faculty handbook, student-parent handbook, written curriculum, staff evaluation procedures, and school board/committee policies and short- and long-range plans
- remain committed to the [NEASC Equity Vision](#)
- be willing to release administrators and faculty members to serve on accreditation visiting teams to other public schools
- be prepared and willing to pay annual dues, evaluation fees, visiting team expenses, and visitor travel expenses on time

Note: Failure to be prepared for a scheduled visit, repeated cancelations or delays, failure to submit the annual update or any fees and dues may result in termination of the accreditation process.

For further information on pursuing or maintaining NEASC Accreditation, i.e., membership, through the Commission on Public Schools, please contact the Commission office at cps@neasc.org.

The Accreditation Journey

The journey to accreditation for first-time schools entails several phases. For details, visit our website at neasc.org/public.

Please note that while NEASC enjoys collaborative relationships with other agencies with whom the association conducts accreditation visits and share protocols, NEASC reserves the right to make all accreditation-related decisions independently and to communicate these decisions independently to schools in accordance with NEASC Policies and Procedures.

Candidacy

Recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation is a first step toward membership in and accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Accreditation is not a single event, but rather an ongoing cycle. Member schools must, according to the appropriate Commission protocol, periodically demonstrate continued alignment with NEASC Standards in order to maintain their NEASC Accreditation.

IMPORTANT: The status of "Candidate" precedes NEASC membership. It is a temporary designation that indicates an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation but is not yet a full member school. Achieving Candidacy does not guarantee eventual NEASC Accreditation.

Application for Candidacy

Public schools or districts in the US seeking Candidate status with NEASC must complete and file an Application for Candidacy with the NEASC Commission on Public Schools. The application forms are available online:

[Candidate for Accreditation Application - Individual School](#)

[Candidate for Accreditation Application – District](#)

Once the completed application has been received and reviewed, and the required application fee

has been submitted, a NEASC staff liaison will contact the school or district to discuss the next steps.

Eligibility

Public K-12 schools (elementary/middle/high schools and technical/career schools and centers) or districts that wish to apply for Candidate status must:

- have completed two years of operation
- be approved by the appropriate government agency
- be tax supported (charter schools are considered on a case-by-case basis)
- publish and distribute a program of studies and student-parent handbook
- submit a narrative assessment of the extent to which the school — or the schools within a district — aligns with each NEASC Standard for Accreditation prior to the candidacy visit.
 - The assessment is to be signed by a committee of representatives of the school, or district, along with a statement of major strengths and needs related to alignment with the Standards, and the school's, or district's, stated core values and beliefs about learning and vision of the graduate/student learning expectations.
- host a visit from NEASC representatives who will help determine the school's (or district's) viability for candidacy
- pay the required candidacy application fee

Candidacy Review

After NEASC has reviewed a completed application, the school or district will be informed of one of the following statuses:

1. The **application is accepted**, in which case the school or district will be invited to proceed with the Self-Reflection process
2. the **application is deferred**, pending submission of additional clarification and documentation
3. the **application is rejected**

Please note that in some cases, the application process may require additional steps.

Candidacy for Accreditation – Granted

Upon receiving Candidacy status, the institution must make a commitment to accreditation by

conducting a Self-Reflection and hosting an Accreditation Visiting Team within three years of becoming a Candidate. Earlier team visits may be scheduled at the discretion of the Commission. The principal should send this request to the Director of the Commission in writing.

Upon reviewing the report of the initial accreditation visiting team, the Commission will consider granting the school or district initial accreditation. The date of initial accreditation would be retroactive to the last day of evaluation by the initial accreditation visiting team.

Candidacy for Accreditation – Denied

If, after a public school or district has submitted a Candidate for Accreditation Application, the Commission determines that it should deny candidacy, the school or district shall be given the opportunity to show cause why such a decision should not be made. The school's or district's response must be received within a reasonable time as determined by the Commission. The school or district may then appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees.

Candidacy for Accreditation – Schools or Districts for which Accreditation Has Been Terminated

Once a school or district has had its NEASC membership terminated, the school or district must undergo a one-year waiting period before applying as a Candidate. When a school or district whose accreditation has been terminated wishes to apply for Candidate status, school/district officials must submit, along with the Candidate for Accreditation Application, a written explanation of their actions to address the deficiencies in its alignment with the Standards for Accreditation for which the school or district lost its accreditation. Based on this information, the Commission Director will determine the length of an appropriate Candidacy visit and the size of the team making such a visit.

Candidacy for Accreditation – Schools or Districts that have Voluntarily Withdrawn from Membership

Once a school or district has voluntarily withdrawn from membership, the school or district must undergo a one-year waiting period before applying as a Candidate.

Self-Reflection

Grade Levels Included in the Self-Reflection

All grades and programs for which a building principal is responsible shall be included in the Self-Reflection and considered by the visiting team. In rare instances where the superintendent and principal request an exception, the burden will be on the school to justify the exclusion of particular grade levels from the Self-Reflection. If the Commission grants the request, the grade levels excluded from the Self-Reflection will not be accredited.

Involvement of Professional Staff in the Self-Reflection

The Self-Reflection of a public school for the purpose of accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges must involve the entire professional staff of the school; however, the school has significant flexibility concerning the assigned roles of each member of the professional staff. For instance, the school may have a small number of administrators and faculty members formally assigned to committees, leaving the rest of the professional staff to support the work of their representative colleagues. Alternatively, the school may also assign every member of the professional staff to Self-Reflection committees. Each Standard narrative prepared for the visiting team must first be accepted by at least a two-thirds vote of the school's professional staff.

Failure to Undertake a Self-Reflection Process

If a school fails to commence a Self-Reflection process at least five months prior to a scheduled Collaborative Conference Visit, the school will be asked to show cause why its accreditation should not be terminated for failure to make reasonable progress.

Visiting Teams

Composition

Visiting teams to public schools comprise educators from a range of disciplines and roles appropriate to the school's grade levels, programs, and population. Visiting teams to K-12 schools include members from elementary, middle, and high schools. The Commission staff may make appropriate changes in the composition of visiting teams based on local needs and the availability of evaluators.

Reports

The prime concern of a visiting team is to assess the quality and impact of the school's educational program in support of the school's philosophy and in alignment with NEASC Standards, including the Foundational Elements and Principles of Effective Practice. Neither the visit report nor any of its subsections are to be interpreted as an evaluation of any individual's performance but rather as a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visitors.

Collaborative Conference and Decennial Accreditation Visit Reports

Members of Collaborative Conference and Decennial Accreditation visiting teams serve as agents of the NEASC Commission on Public Schools during their service to a school.

During the draft stage of the Collaborative Conference Report or Decennial Accreditation Visit Report, the principal may request that the NEASC staff liaison or visiting team chair revise the report to ensure its factual accuracy. The NEASC staff liaison or visiting team chair may make appropriate changes.

The chair of the visiting team is responsible for the preparation of the draft version of the report that will be submitted to the NEASC staff liaison, who will be responsible for the preparation of the report in its final form and its submission to the school and the Commission office. The principal is responsible for the distribution of the final report in compliance with the Commission Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Collaborative Conference Report or Decennial Accreditation Visit Report (See policy below.).

Commission Directed Visits and Special Reports

The Commission may, at its discretion, send a small visiting team to examine a school's alignment with one or more of the Standards for Accreditation at a time other than that of the normal Collaborative Conference Visit or Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Special reports and Commission Directed Visits can be prompted by serious concerns related to accreditation or substantive changes within the school and can be requested of member schools at any time deemed necessary.

New Element Report

NEASC recognizes that schools may undergo major, sometimes significant, structural changes. Accredited member schools may thus decide to add a "New Element." Typical examples include a new offering, e.g., Early Childhood, IB Diploma Program, new grade levels on an existing campus, a new campus at another location, an online/blended program added to an existing brick-and-mortar school, or the addition of a high school diploma option which a school may seek to have specifically included within their accreditation status.

Schools wishing to add a New Element must complete a New Element Report to assess the impact on learning and alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and Foundational Elements therein. A special visit may be required before the New Element is considered part of the school's accredited status.

Special Progress Reports

The Commission may request a Special Progress Report at any time during the decennial process and in addition to the routine First Report of Progress and Planning, Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning, and Six-Year Report of Progress and Planning.

The conditions prompting a Special Progress Report may include:

- a special circumstance or emergency situation, e.g., fire, structural problems
- an update of information of a school on warning or probation, which may change the school's status
- a significant health or safety issue
- insufficient information which suggests that the school may no longer be in alignment with one or more of the Standards for Accreditation
- conditions contrary to one or more of the Commission on Public Schools Policies, Guidelines, or other expectations of NEASC membership
- a substantive change report that warrants immediate follow-up

Substantive Change Report

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission, within sixty (60) days of occurrence, any substantive change in the school that has a negative impact on the school's ability to align with any of the Standards for Accreditation or part(s) thereof. The report of a substantive change must describe the change and detail its impact on the school's ability to align with the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be negative substantive changes that 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 school counselors
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support faculty or staff

- decreases in student services
- cuts in the library/media center 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, vocational students, or students with limited English proficiency

Reports of positive substantive changes are not required but may be submitted to the Director of the Commission at the discretion of the building principal.

Distribution, Use, and Scope of Reports

Only the chair of the visiting team and NEASC staff liaison may share the draft version of the Collaborative Conference Report or Decennial Accreditation Visit Report with the school.

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools considers a school's Collaborative Conference Report or Decennial Accreditation Visit Report to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission to the principal of the school. Once reviewed by the Commission and sent to the principal, the distribution of the report to the school community is the responsibility of the principal, as follows:

- The final Collaborative Conference Report should be shared and discussed with the school's faculty, superintendent, and school board/committee.
- The final Decennial Accreditation Visit Report must be released in its entirety within sixty days of its receipt from the Commission office to the:
 - superintendent of schools
 - board of education
 - members of the faculty
 - state department of education
 - public library or city/town office
 - appropriate news media

All Collaborative Conference and Decennial Accreditation Reports shall remain the property of the Commission on Public Schools.

Submission of Required Reports and Documents

Routine progress reports are required of member schools. These include the First Report of Progress and Planning, the Three-Year Report of Progress and Planning, and the Six-Year Report of Progress and Planning. Each report is assigned a due date based on the date the Commission reviews a school's Decennial Accreditation Report. Schools will receive Commission notification letters identifying each due date.

Requested Special Progress Reports must be submitted by the due date indicated in the respective Commission notification letter.

Member schools are also required to submit other documents, including:

- a statement confirming the distribution of the Decennial Accreditation Report
- an Application for Evaluation, due by June 30th, three years prior to the school's next Decennial Accreditation Visit
- Annual Information Report (AIR) noting school enrollment, grade structure, any substantive changes not previously reported, and nominations for visiting team members

Failure to submit a required report or other documents is sufficient cause for the Committee to recommend probation or termination of accreditation.

Commission on Public Schools Guidelines

The following guidelines have been approved by the Commission on Public Schools to be used in its deliberation about the accreditation status of member schools:

Accessibility to Facilities for the Handicapped

The Commission expects that the entire school facility and all programs will be accessible to the handicapped. If such is not the case, school officials shall provide details on how the school meets the needs of the handicapped in compliance with state and federal law or shall provide an action plan to make the school and all programs fully accessible to the handicapped.

School Counselor/Counselee Ratio

Each member school should have a school counselor/counselee ratio not to exceed 250:1. If this caseload is exceeded, the school will be asked to demonstrate that a full range of counseling services is consistently provided that meet students' personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel, including professional guidance in course selection and regular student individual and group meetings with school counselors and other mental health professionals. The school will be asked to clarify the school counselors' roles in crisis intervention teams, mediation and violence prevention programs, special education and 504 teams, and working with community mental health providers and other partnerships. The school must also indicate how all students receive mental health services from adequate, certified/licensed personnel in addition to school counselors, e.g., social workers, psychologists, etc.

Curricular Offerings in Member Schools

There shall be formal programs available to students in myriad areas, e.g., academics; career and technical education; applied, visual, and performing arts; etc. If a school drops, combines, or eliminates school programs, it will be asked to indicate what appropriate alternatives have been provided to ensure students are prepared to live and work beyond graduation.

Graduation Rates (and Completion Rates)

Schools reporting low or decreased graduation rates (or completion rates for career and technical centers or programs) shall describe and assess the effectiveness of programs and services offered to address the graduation (or completion) rate problem. The Commission shall expect that reasonable progress will be shown by the school in increasing the graduation (or completion) rate.

Health Services

Each member school should have health services that ensure all students' physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel, such as (a) registered nurse(s), available in the building (or on campus for career and technical centers or programs) throughout the school day to provide preventive health services and direct intervention for students. If a school does not have a registered nurse or other medical professional possessing equivalent training and licensure providing such services, it will be asked to demonstrate that the following comprehensive services are being provided:

- first aid care provision
- ongoing student health assessments
- help families with accessing healthcare services
- coordination of care for students with chronic or acute health conditions and care plan development
- communication with teachers and staff for student safety and well-being
- participation in student evaluation for special services, including special education 504 action plans
- coordination and implementation of vision, hearing, and other student health screenings
- health records maintained for every student
- current immunizations
- physical examinations provided as required by state statute
- administration of medications as required by state statute
- appropriate referrals
- appropriate emergency response mechanisms
- education and training of the faculty and staff on asthma, life-threatening allergies, diabetes, and blood-borne pathogens

School Library/Media Specialists

Each member school should have a full-time, certified school library/media specialist. If a school does not meet this guideline, it will be asked to demonstrate that the following library/information services are being provided:

- All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel possessing professional expertise in literature, research, technology, and inquiry.
- Professional library/information services personnel:

- are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum and instructional practices and support teachers in enhancing student learning
 - provide professional support to classroom teachers to ensure high-quality instruction on information literacy, research techniques, citing sources, and accessing literature from a variety of genres
 - are responsive to students' interests and needs to support independent reading and lifelong learning
 - assist students in becoming active learners who have opportunities to lead their learning.
- The library/media center is open throughout the school day and before and after school.

Schools Requesting Postponements

When a school requests a postponement of its decennial cycle, Collaborative Conference Visit, or Decennial Accreditation Visit, the director may grant this postponement if the postponement request is within one year of the previously scheduled event (either decennial cycle or visit). If the request is for a postponement of more than one year, the request would be referred to the Commission, which may consider it for approval.

A school seeking a postponement for a Collaborative Conference Visit and/or Decennial Accreditation Visit must submit to the Director of the Commission a written request on school or district letterhead signed by the principal and superintendent. The request must include the length of time sought and an explanation detailing the reason(s) for the requested postponement. Instead of a traditional letter, the request may be an email message from the principal and superintendent's district email account with one or the other copied. The Commission would accept such an email message as equivalent to duly signed paper correspondence.

Use of Portable Classrooms or Separate Buildings

Schools with portable classrooms or separate buildings must:

- be able to ensure that students and adults travel safely between buildings
- have systems and infrastructure features that prevent access by unexpected, unwelcome individuals
- demonstrate that the facilities are:
 - safe
 - support the instructional program
 - connected to the main public address system to ensure appropriate communication

- connected to the school Wi-Fi or wired network
- in proximity to readily accessible restrooms
- handicapped accessible
- included in all emergency plans, e.g., fire evacuations and lockdowns
- not isolating students, teachers, or programs.

Adverse Actions

Warning

NEASC may place a school on warning to afford it the opportunity to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate corrective actions within a stated time period if a school has failed to make a suitable degree of progress in its aligning with one or more of the Foundational Elements within the Standards for Accreditation, make a suitable degree of progress in completing its Priority Areas for Growth goals, submit a required report, or meet other Commission expectations or responsibilities of NEASC membership.

A warning does not affect the accredited status of the school and is not a public status. The school must respond to NEASC's concerns within a reasonable time as determined by the Commission. A school will remain on warning until the specified problem(s) have been resolved to the satisfaction of NEASC.

If a school placed on warning fails to make significant progress in resolving the identified problem(s), NEASC may place the school on probation. The school will be given an opportunity to show cause why the action should not be taken. If the school fails to show cause successfully and is placed on probation, the school may then invoke the appeals procedure established by NEASC.

Probation

NEASC may place a school on probation to compel it to correct its ongoing deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate corrective actions within a stated time period if, after having been placed on warning, the school continues to fail to demonstrate it has made a suitable degree of progress in its aligning with one or more of the Foundational Elements within the Standards for Accreditation, demonstrate it has made a suitable degree of progress in completing its Priority Areas for Growth goals, submit a required report, or meet other Commission expectations or responsibilities of NEASC membership to the extent that, if identified concerns are not resolved in a timely manner, the school is in danger of losing its Accreditation.

During a probationary period, the school retains its candidate or accredited status. Probation is a public status and a school on probation will be identified by an asterisk on their school listing on the NEASC website.

If, after a reasonable time as determined by the Commission the school fails to demonstrate suitable progress to address the concerns prompting the probationary status, NEASC may choose to terminate the school's candidacy or accreditation. The school will be given an opportunity to show cause why the action should not be taken. If the school fails to show cause successfully and their candidacy or accreditation is terminated, the school may then invoke the appeals procedure established by NEASC.

Termination of Accreditation

NEASC may terminate a school's accreditation for ongoing failure to resolve deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate corrective actions within a stated time period if, after having been placed on probation, the school continues to fail to:

- demonstrate that it has made a suitable progress in aligning with one or more of the Foundational Elements within the Standards for Accreditation
- show suitable progress in completing its Priority Areas for Growth goals
- fully engage in the Accreditation process, including but not limited to:
 - completing its Self-Reflection process and/or Self-Reflection Report
 - hosting the Collaborative Conference Visit and/or Decennial Accreditation Visit
- submit a required report
- meet the NEASC Accreditation eligibility requirements for public schools
- meet any other Commission expectations or responsibilities of NEASC membership

Please note that other acts or omissions deemed in violation of NEASC's expectations for school practices and operations may also subject a school to adverse actions (see section on unethical practices in member schools).

A school whose accreditation or candidacy has been denied or terminated may apply for reconsideration after no less than one year, after which the Commission will determine if, and on what conditions, the school may restart the accreditation process.

The above does not preempt a school's right to appeal a decision to deny initial or continuing accreditation.

Termination/Withdrawal

If a school or district chooses to voluntarily withdraw from NEASC Accreditation, or if its accreditation or candidacy is denied or terminated by NEASC, affiliation with NEASC immediately ceases, unless otherwise specified in writing by NEASC.

Schools that have withdrawn or whose accreditation journey has been terminated by NEASC:

- must immediately remove any reference to NEASC membership or status from their website and publications
- may not use the NEASC logo in any printed or digital materials

Complaints Concerning Alleged Unethical Practices in Member Schools

Public schools accredited by NEASC are expected to operate in the public interest and in accordance with ethical practices with respect to the rights and responsibilities of students, faculty members, administrators, board members, and all others related to the institution.

If NEASC receives a request to investigate an alleged violation of ethical practices in a member school, its response to such a request will depend upon the nature of the charges and the evidence offered. NEASC will not accept anonymous requests for such investigations. Moreover, only substantially supported allegations of systemic actions or practices that could seriously impair the quality and effectiveness of the school will be considered as a basis for further inquiry. Unless the situation suggests the kind of capricious or unprofessional action that precludes the continued adherence to NEASC policies or guidelines or alignment with the Standards for Accreditation, NEASC will not intervene on behalf of individuals. Such a request must also contain evidence that the matter was presented to the school superintendent and the board of education and that they refused to act.

If the circumstances appear to be more serious, NEASC may conduct an inquiry with the knowledge of and in conference with those concerned. Findings will be reported to NEASC for its consideration. Should deliberations lead to a recommendation for an adverse action, the school may then invoke the appeals procedure established by NEASC.

For more information on Appeal of Adverse Actions, please visit the NEASC website at neasc.org/policies.

About Us

Resources

More information about public school accreditation is available on our website at www.neasc.org

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