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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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December 18, 2013

N. Roy Hamond
Principal
Amesbury High School
5 Highland Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

Dear Mr. Hamond:

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools, at its October 27-28, 2013 meeting, reviewed the decennial evaluation report from the recent visit to Amesbury High School and voted to award the school continued accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Committee was impressed with many of the programs and services and wishes to commend the following:

- the core values and beliefs that reflect the use of an inclusive process in its development
- the development of analytic rubrics aligned to the school's learning expectations
- the adoption and use of a common template to record evidence of essential questions, concepts, content, skills, 21st century learning expectations, and instructional strategies
- the development of a wide variety of curriculum options despite limited resources
- the extensive opportunity for authentic learning both within the school and in the school community, including Entrepreneurship and American Studies
- the collaboration of the professional staff in the Teaching and Learning Alliance and in Critical Friends Groups
- the frequent examples of personalized learning based on student choice of reading assignments and projects

- the use of formative and summative assessments to drive instructional practice
- the availability of teachers to provide academic support to all students
- the development of a formal process based on school-wide rubrics to assess whole school and individual student progress in meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations
- the initial steps to design a formal process for reporting, reviewing, and revising student progress on the schools core values and beliefs about learning

As well, the Committee was pleased to note the following:

- the safe and supportive school culture and climate
- the inclusion of heterogeneously grouped courses
- the implementation of a comprehensive advisory program
- the collaboration between school support personnel and community organizations to meet student social and emotional needs
- the use of technology such as Kurzweil Software and Dragon Naturally Speaking to enhance student learning
- the full partnership with local colleges to enhance student learning opportunities
- the maintenance of buildings and grounds to support student learning and to ensure a healthy school environment
- the partnership with local businesses and organizations to support student learning which includes mentoring opportunities, mentorships and apprenticeships
- the use of web pages, Connect Ed on-line and the ASPEN Student Information System to communicate regularly with parents

The Committee requests that school officials submit a Special Progress Report by September 1, 2014 providing detailed information on action taken to address the following:

- develop definitive timelines for the implementation of the social and civic learning expectations
- ensure all 21st century learning expectations have associated, specific school-wide analytic rubrics

All accredited schools must submit a required Two-Year Progress Report, which in the case of Amesbury High School is due on October 1, 2015. Information about the proper preparation of the Two-Year Progress Report was provided to school representatives at the Follow-Up Seminar and is included in *Directions for the Preparation of the Two-Year Progress Report* which can be found at <http://cpss.neasc.org>. In that report school officials are required to respond to two types of recommendations: (1) highlighted recommendations from notification letter(s) and (2) general report recommendations from the school's decennial evaluation report.

With regard to the reporting of action taken on evaluation report recommendations, school officials should indicate the status of each recommendation by classifying it in one of five categories: Completed, In Progress, Planned for the Future, Rejected, or No Action. In addition,

for each valid recommendation in the evaluation report there should be a brief description of the action that has been taken to address the recommendations, including anticipated dates of completion where applicable. Special care should be taken to include appropriate information to justify the Rejected or No Action status of any recommendation.

In addition to providing information on action taken to address each evaluation report recommendation, the Two-Year Progress Report should also provide detailed explanations regarding the manner in which each of the following highlighted recommendations has been addressed:

- develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
- ensure proper alignment between the written and taught curriculum
- develop a formal curriculum review cycle to provide for the regular review, evaluation, and revision of curriculum
- establish a system to ensure that all units of study include 21st century learning expectations, as well as essential questions, concepts, content, skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices that include school-wide rubrics are accessible on the ASPEN student information portal to all constituents
- develop a formalized process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
- develop a written developmental guidance curriculum
- implement a formalized system to report individual student achievement of the school's learning expectations to the student and their families
- review the school's schedule to ensure the organization of time best supports the learning needs of all students, research-based instruction, and professional collaboration
- ensure processes are in place for special education support staff to regularly and formally collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's learning expectations
- provide dependable funding for all school programs and services, including technology support, computer accessibility, and instructional material
- repair the water damage in the former athletic storage area

The Committee congratulates the school administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the accreditation program: the self-study and the evaluation visit. The next step will be the follow-up process during which the school will implement valid recommendations in the evaluation report. The Committee's Follow-Up Seminars should help you and your faculty develop a schedule for implementing valid recommendations. In addition, the Committee's *Accreditation Handbook* provides information on follow-up procedures.

The school's accreditation status will be reviewed when the Committee considers the Special Progress Report. Consistent with the Committee's follow-up procedures, the Special Progress

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Report should include an electronic signature of the principal and chair of the school's Follow-Up Committee and be sent electronically to the Committee office at the following address: cpssreports@neasc.org. As well, please notify the Committee office immediately of any changes in the names of the principal and/or superintendent along with their corresponding e-mail addresses by submitting this information electronically to cpss-air@neasc.org.

Sincerely,



Janet D. Allison

JDA/rt

cc: Michele S. Robinson, Superintendent, Amesbury Public Schools
Thatcher Kezer, Mayor, Amesbury School Committee
Daniel F. Warner, Chair of the Visiting Committee
Robert E. Littlefield, Chair, Committee on Public Secondary Schools