

THE EVALUATION

This section describes in detail the procedures which should be followed by the principal and Steering Committee during the evaluation visit.

During the Evaluation Visit

The evaluation visit is the second phase of the accreditation process in which the school hosts the visiting committee for three and one-half days.

As part of the self-study, the school articulated conclusions regarding its adherence to the Standards. It also identified needs which should be addressed so that the school better meets its own core values, beliefs about learning, and expectations for student learning.

The task of the visiting committee is to determine *the extent to which the school meets the seven Standards for Accreditation* and *what it needs to do to improve and better meet its stated core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations.*

The visiting committee will ensure examination of self-study findings by talking with:

- self-study committees
- groups of parents
- groups of students
- groups of teachers
- individual teachers
- school administrators
- school committee/board members
- central office personnel
- support staff
- community representatives

Given the responsibilities of the visiting committee, the accredited school should not expect to receive a comprehensive evaluation of every school program or department. The Committee will look at these areas only to determine how they contribute to the school's adherence to the Standards for Accreditation.

During the visit the school program should be routine, **with no special performances, large field trips, or activities taking place.** A sample visiting committee work schedule appears on page A5 in the appendix.

Availability of Various Groups and Individuals During the Committee's Visit

The most important thing that the Steering Committee can do during the stay of the visiting committee is to ensure that faculty, administration, support staff, students, parents, and community members are clear about the times and meeting places of the various committees. Teachers' meeting schedules and room availability should be double-checked to ensure that any necessary coverage or adjusted room assignments have been arranged. Faculty should be given a schedule of events which indicates who is to meet with whom and where. Parents should be asked to be prompt for meetings they will be attending, as adherence to the schedule and time-line is very important.

Meetings with Individual Teachers

Every visiting committee member, including the chair and assistant chair, will meet with each of two teachers for 30 minutes. The purpose of these meetings is to give the visiting committee an opportunity to talk one-on-one with teachers about teaching and learning as it happens in their individual classrooms.

Faculty will be asked to provide an overview of the instructional and assessment approaches that they use. As well, they will be asked to bring two examples of student work to the meeting and to discuss how this work is representative of how they assess and respond to student learning, especially as it relates to the 21st century learning expectations. Individual teachers involved in these meetings will be chosen randomly by the chair of the team well in advance of the visit.

Panel Presentation

The school should organize a panel comprised of building administrators, teachers, and students to make a formal presentation to the visiting committee on Sunday afternoon.

The presentation should last approximately 60 minutes and include a discussion by the school's panel members of the following topics:

- significant data from the School and Community Summary
- an explanation of the school's core values and beliefs about learning and the commitment to the document
- issues and challenges facing the school and the connection between those issues, the school's core values and beliefs about learning, and any important evidence collected
- the school's critical strengths and needs
- the school's Two-Year and Five-Year Targeted Plan
- an overview of how the school measures student achievement of the learning expectations
- question and answer period

Student Guides During the Visit

The Steering Committee should arrange for at least one student guide to be available each period during Monday and Tuesday of the evaluation visit to help committee members or answer questions. Schools frequently schedule a guide to sit outside the workroom.

Impromptu Meetings with Students, Teachers, and Community Members

It frequently happens that students or teachers request an additional meeting with members of the visiting committee. Should this be the case, the Steering Committee should make every effort to accommodate those requesting the meeting by working with the visiting committee chair and assistant chair to schedule meeting times.

Student Shadowing and Classroom Visitations

Shadowing students and visiting classrooms are among the Committee's responsibilities. Teachers should be encouraged to conduct classes in a normal manner. The Steering Committee should remind teachers that it is the role of the visiting committee to gain a sense of such things as patterns of instruction, the degree of rigor of the instruction, assessment practices, the culture of the school, and the adequacy of classroom furniture, technology, equipment and other materials to support the curriculum. The Steering Committee chair/co-chair should alert the chair or assistant chair of the visiting committee if any teachers in the school are particularly anxious that their classes be visited. The visiting committee will make every effort to visit as many teachers as possible, but it is usually not possible for the team to visit every teacher.

Return of Self-Study Materials

At the conclusion of the evaluation visit, all self-study materials used by the Committee are returned or destroyed. The school may wish to remind the chair/assistant chair.

Reimbursement of Visiting Committee Travel Expenses

The school should collect travel vouchers from the assistant chair as early as possible during the Committee visit. It is an expectation that the school will reimburse visiting committee members at the federal mileage rate as well as all tolls for their travel expenses before they leave the school, if possible.

The principal as a member of the Steering Committee should inform the system's business office of the Commission's request for payment of team expenses before the end of the visit. If there are any problems, contact the Commission office before the team visit.

The Chair's Closing Remarks

The principal should schedule a faculty meeting to take place at the end of the evaluation visit. During this time, the chair will deliver the closing remarks to faculty, administration, superintendent, and school board/committee. The presentation will take no more than approximately 30 minutes and will be devoted primarily to a summary of the highlights of the visiting committee report. Chairs usually comment on the quality of the self-study and briefly discuss salient conclusions drawn by the Committee.

In keeping with the visit protocol, no members of the press should attend the presentation, and no notes should be taken or recordings of the comments should be made.

After the Evaluation Visit

Professional Editing of the Draft

All chairs are required to submit the draft of the evaluation report to the Commission's professional staff for editing by a professional editor **prior** to submitting a revised draft to the principal. *The Commission office will bill schools directly for this service.*

Receipt of the Draft

Approximately ten to twelve weeks after the visit, the chair of the visiting committee will submit a draft copy of the evaluation report to the principal who will have an opportunity to review the document for its overall content. The draft is not shared with the faculty. Within ten school days, the principal should communicate any comments or concerns to the chair. All contents of the draft are subject to discussion with the chair. The chair is authorized to correct factual inaccuracies and/or conclusions resulting from factual inaccuracies. The Commission relies on the chair's judgment regarding the appropriateness of other requested changes.

Resolution of Concerns

The principal or chair should contact the Commission office if there are points of concern which cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the chair and the principal. Following the evaluation visit, the principal has the opportunity to respond to differences in interpretation in a Questionnaire for Principals which may be included with the evaluation report when it is considered by the Commission. A copy of the Questionnaire for Principals can be found in the Appendix on pages A19-20.

Editing, Word Processing, and Other Expenses

The chair will send the school a bill for word processing services and supplies provided in the preparation of the evaluation report as well as travel, meals, lodging, postage, and other expenses incurred while performing the official duties as chair. The school should make every effort to reimburse these expenses as quickly as possible.

Distribution of the Evaluation Report

The chair will return two copies of the final report and an e-copy to the principal who is responsible for the distribution of a sufficient number of copies. Once the completed evaluation report has been submitted to the school by the chair, the principal must send one copy of the final report to the appropriate state department educational official (see page 65). The principal should arrange for sufficient copies to be distributed to appropriate school and town officials. The visiting committee chair is required to send an e-copy of the final report to the Commission office.

In addition, the principal must release the report within 60 days following receipt of the final report in accordance with the Commission's distribution policy. Specifically, the school is required to release the report in its entirety to the superintendent, school board, each member of the visiting committee, public library or town office, and the appropriate news media. No excerpts of the report may be given to the press or to citizens unless the entire report is released. School officials should be sensitive to following an appropriate protocol when releasing the evaluation report. The superintendent, school board, and faculty, for example, should be given the report before parents, community members, and students. The principal is required to submit a completed Public Disclosure form to the Commission office indicating that the school has complied with the policy. This form is sent to the Commission office following the committee visit. A copy of the Public Disclosure form can be found in the Appendix on pages A21-A22.

Commission Action

Upon receipt of the evaluation report in the Commission office, a summary is prepared for Commission members who also have access to the entire evaluation report. The full evaluation report is considered by a review committee of Commission members which makes a report to the full Commission.

The Commission meets four times a year, usually in January, March, June, and September/October. Reports from schools evaluated in the fall are considered at the March meeting, and those from schools evaluated in the spring are considered at the September/October meeting.

Reading the Draft

Suggestions for the Principal

1. Read the document in its entirety to get a sense of its:
 - a) clarity
 - b) accuracy
 - c) points of concern
2. Examine sections of the report for the following:
 - a) Overview of the Findings
Are they referenced and/or substantiated in various sections of the report?
 - b) Conclusions
 1. Are they clear and supported by commendations/recommendations?
 2. Is any phraseology troubling?
 3. Are they, in your view, valid?
 4. Do they warrant discussion with the chair?
 - c) Commendations/Recommendations
 1. Are they clear and understood?
 2. Have major commendations/recommendations been appropriately referenced in conclusions?
 3. Are recommendations written in such a way that they can be implemented and/or completed?
3. Decide whether to utilize other school personnel in reviewing the draft, e.g., chair and/or members of the Steering Committee, other building administrators, central office administrators.
4. Be prepared to discuss:
 - a) factual inaccuracies
 - b) areas which need clarification
 - c) concerns/issues regarding phraseology
 - d) the basis for conclusions and how they were validated
 - e) requested changes in commendations/recommendations

All contents of the draft are subject to discussion with the chair. While all portions of the draft are open for discussion, the chair is authorized to make the determination regarding any changes that are made. If a principal continues to be concerned following the discussion of the draft, he/she may contact the Commission Staff for further consideration.

New England State Departments of Education

A copy of the final evaluation report should be sent to the appropriate state department of education official:

Connecticut	New Hampshire
Barbara Westwater, Chief Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction 165 Capitol Avenue P. O. Box 2219 Hartford, CT 06145-2219	Edward Murdough School Approval State Department of Education State Office Park South 101 Pleasant Street Concord, NH 03301-3860
Maine	Rhode Island
Edwin Kastuck, Ph.D., Consultant State Department of Education 23 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333	Andrea Castenada, Chief Accelerating School Performance Rhode Island Department of Education 255 Westminster Street Providence, RI 02903-3400
Massachusetts	Vermont
Eva Mitchell, Director Center for District and School Accountability Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) 75 Pleasant Street Malden, MA 02148-4906	John Fischer, Director Integrated Support for Learning, Secondary & Adult State Department of Education 120 State Street Montpelier, VT 05620

*Schools should check with their state departments of education to determine if they can submit a copy of the evaluation report electronically.