

**Section I - Examples of Detailed Responses to Highlighted Recommendations
(from notification letters)**

**Five-Year Progress Report of Soaring Eagle High School
March 1, 2009**

1. Increase opportunities for teachers across the disciplines to dialogue and reflect about best practices, authentic assessments, student work, and student self-assessment.

Classification: Completed

Response: As a result of the NEASC accreditation process, the visiting team and our own faculty recognized areas of concern involving teacher collaboration. A committee was formed, and through its work, we have improved our efforts to have teachers collaborate within and across disciplines. It is our belief that we have improved our collaborative efforts on curriculum and instruction which will, in turn, improve student learning.

The collaboration committee also worked with the administration to implement and pilot two new initiatives for teacher collaboration time and peer coaching. A teacher collaboration time request sheet can be filled out by faculty members for release time to develop and implement interdisciplinary lessons that will enhance student learning. The administration stressed to the faculty that effective teacher collaboration entails extended planning and therefore coverage time for teachers to collaborate with other teachers will be provided. Also, the collaboration committee created a peer coaching/peer visitation request sheet. This new program will give teachers the opportunity to visit each other's classes to broaden teaching and learning strategies. Again, in order for this program to work and be effective, providing coverage for teachers is critical.

The collaboration committee recommended more in-service workshops focusing on the creation and implementation of interdisciplinary lessons and units. Through our NEASC self-study and the work of the collaboration committee, it was found that the faculty needs more training and instruction on creating interdisciplinary units. This is seen as a critical component to teacher collaboration, and its importance was shared with the central office administration. As a result, during our fall 2007 in-service, a workshop entitled "Creative Approaches to Teaching in Lengthened Periods" was offered.

Another recommendation made by the collaboration committee concerns challenges faced by teachers who teach the same courses. Our faculty and administration are concerned with rigor in our curricula. Particularly important is the challenge of instituting similar standards of rigor for a course taught by two or more teachers. Although addressed by our NEASC rigor committee, it also ties into the task of the collaboration committee. In order to promote common standards of rigor, the collaboration committee has proposed increased time for teachers of the same course to create common instruction and assessment tools that will foster equitable rigor. As a result, we made more effective use of our meeting time, both at the departmental and faculty levels, during the 2007-2008 school year. For example, early in the year departments focused on our curriculum revision process and cycle while our January department meetings focused on sharing mid-year exams and discussing standards across grade levels. In our November faculty meeting we examined our rubrics, assessing which departments were undertaking primary responsibility for each of them. During the 2008-2009 school year, our

professional learning groups will provide an additional forum for these discussions. More effective use of meeting time has resulted in improved teaching practices.

The collaboration committee was also concerned with teacher isolation, especially for single-teacher or small departments. Better communication to promote the collaboration of small departments with larger departments is needed at our school. In order to begin to foster collaboration, small departments need to meet periodically with larger ones in order to address interdisciplinary concepts that can be integrated into the curricula. Encouraging teacher involvement in educational organizations related to their discipline also reduces teacher isolation.

In addition, since 2006 our faculty has been working on curriculum maps. Teachers have been developing curriculum maps for their courses and putting them on our school network. Faculty will have access to the curriculum maps of all courses enabling teachers to plan and create collaborative lessons and providing a wonderful resource for new teachers. Access to the network is now available throughout the school in both classrooms and departmental offices.

Several proposed recommendations regarding collaboration have already been implemented. Others will be studied as the faculty becomes more accustomed to the new school schedule. This schedule should promote further collaboration. Teacher isolation leads to stagnation; collaboration improves teaching practices and student learning. Thus, collaboration was a critical part our NEASC self study and its promotion as part of the follow up process is leading to an improved school environment.

One major initiative planned for the 2008-2009 school year concerns the creation of professional learning groups. These teacher groups will meet during the school day. In addition to a planning period, all teachers have a resource period. Once each week during their resource period, teachers will meet with colleagues in order to discuss teaching and learning. The agenda will be focused and will allow teachers to address school-wide concerns. Professional learning groups will keep a log of activities and issues for documentation purposes. As the year begins, we will be examining our Expectations for Student Learning, our assessment process, state frameworks and the use of technology. Implementing professional learning groups will enable Soaring Eagle High School to move towards reaching its goal of becoming a professional learning community.

2. Provide more opportunities for student self-assessment.

Classification: Completed

Response: As we began the self study process, teachers made a significant commitment to integrate student self-assessment within their curriculum. At that time we asked teachers to examine their curriculum and include opportunities for self-assessment at several points throughout the year. We shared tools and strategies for doing so and gathered samples of both instruments and student responses. Further, we discussed how to use the information in meaningful ways to improve teaching and learning. Now, we believe it is the individual teacher's responsibility to continue this process. As each semester draws to a close, examples of student self-assessment are shared at the departmental level. When the principal met with each of the elective areas in January

2008, student self-assessments and student reflections on the Expectations for Student Learning were the major topic for discussion. These assessments will continue to be a topic of discussion not only at department meetings but also in our professional learning groups. Emphasis will be placed upon how we can use this data to improve the effectiveness of our curriculum. Likewise, administrators often include student self-assessment as a topic within the teacher evaluation process. In the fall of 2009, the high school faculty will have an in-service on assessment that will include a component related to student self assessment.

3. Provide representation on the leadership team from each of the elective departments to ensure appropriate involvement in the decision-making process.

Classification: Completed

Response: The leadership team consists of the high school principal, assistant principal, director of guidance, and curriculum leaders in the areas of English, science, mathematics and social studies. At this time fiscal constraints and the small size of most other departments impede the creation of additional leadership positions. To address this concern, the principal schedules bi-monthly meetings with each of the small departments and monthly meetings with the world languages department. This provides the same opportunity for access and input as those departments represented on the leadership team. This allows them to focus on curricular issues, share current initiatives and address problems or concerns that may arise in a given discipline. The teachers, working collaboratively with the principal, have a primary role in the decision-making process in terms of budget development, course offerings, and curricular revisions. This approach, initiated in the 2007-2008 school year, will be refined in the 2008-09 school year as departments begin to assume more responsibility and develop meeting agendas collaboratively.

4. Provide support for technology initiatives that are infused into instruction, including the necessary equipment and professional development.

Classification: In Progress

Response: As part of our addition/renovation plan, each classroom has updated technology that facilitates access and integration. Twenty-three Smart Boards are located throughout the building, providing increased opportunities for integration. During the in-service time in the fall of 2007, training in technology was a mandated teacher requirement at the high school. Topics covered included the use of "GradeQuick," Smart Boards, and other equipment available in each room. Also the process and procedures for putting information on the school website were reviewed. Teachers will receive additional training and updates on the Techpaths software already introduced for our curriculum mapping initiative. At this time, the project is not yet complete and therefore requires on-going monitoring.

5. Develop and implement a curriculum review cycle for all disciplines and commit the time, resources and funding for this process.

Classification: Completed

Response: Within departments we have created a five year plan for standardized curriculum revision and for the acquisition of necessary texts and support materials. The work was completed by the high school staff and, as such, reflects its perspective on student needs. Our district plan for curriculum will undergo revision during the 2008-2009 school year and we will participate in its development. During the summer of 2008 administrative in-service, a draft document was developed as the first step in this process. This draft is consistent with the indicators found in the NEASC curriculum standard. Currently we are in the middle of two district initiatives regarding curriculum development. The first is Understanding by Design and the other is curriculum mapping using TechPaths software that will facilitate improved articulation across grade levels. District in-service in 2007-2008 focused on providing the technical skills to utilize this software effectively. In addition, at the high school we received training on the development of essential questions. In April, 2008 a district sub-committee met to assess progress on our district plan and to establish goals for the 2008-2009 school year. The high school principal has an annual allocation for the support of curriculum development that includes a component for resource materials as well as for curriculum work by staff members.

6. Review the level of challenge of the curriculum in terms of the extent to which it engages all students in inquiry, problem solving, critical thinking and the authentic application of knowledge, and report any resultant modifications.

Classification: Completed

Response: During the 2007-2008 school year, a committee of members from all departments reviewed our curricula concerning rigor and depth over breadth of coverage. A definition of rigor, taken from Strong, Silver and Perini, Teaching What Matters Most, was used to ensure consistency across departments. The committee members went to their departments and reviewed their respective modifications for rigor and depth over breadth of coverage in accordance with the NEASC recommendations. Each department was then asked to present a report to the committee outlining its modifications, and each report was discussed by the committee to determine if the modifications were in line with the NEASC recommendations. To ensure ongoing consistency and alignment, we established this concern as a school-wide priority that will be addressed at the leadership level, within departments, and within professional learning groups. Certain modifications were common across departments such as implementing Understanding by Design and curriculum mapping, restructuring due to the new schedule, and increasing the use of student self-assessment. Others were unique to specific disciplines and/or courses. A file that includes departmental reports and modifications is available in the main office.