

2020 - A VISION FOR LEARNING

OVERVIEW

of the Redesigned Accreditation Process

for Public Elementary, Middle and High Schools seeking Accreditation in 2020

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Commission on Public Schools

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Guiding Principles

for the Redesigned Accreditation Process

Over the past several years, the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS) has been involved in a purposeful effort to reflect on the value of Accreditation and re-design the Accreditation process to better meet the changing needs of member schools. We held numerous regional meetings to gather feedback from member schools and districts about what is working and what needs to be improved; we convened multiple advisory committees with representatives from accredited schools and districts to help us brainstorm new ideas and revise current practices; and we are currently involved in a Standards review process to create a revised set of Standards for Accreditation. Throughout this collaborative process, we have been led by a set of principles to guide our 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 toward 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 CPSS mission and core values, as a guide, it is our hope that we have created a new Accreditation process that is adaptable to individual school needs and ensures every school has the support from NEASC that it needs to move forward on its journey toward growth and improvement.

Overview

of the Redesigned Accreditation Process

Step 1 – Creation of the Steering Committee and Self-Reflection Committee

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, the school's capacity for continuous growth, and the ability to be an effective learning organization.

Steering Committee

The school will establish 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 committee includes 2 Accreditation Coordinator(s), who are selected by the principal from the faculty.

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.

School Self-Reflection Committee

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 school will develop 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.
- One Self-Reflection Committee, made up of various members of the school community, reviews all the Standards or, alternately, several smaller committees can be formed to review individual Standards.
- The committee(s) is representative of multiple stakeholders in the school community, such as administrators, teachers, professional staff in support roles, parents, students, community members, etc.
- The committee engages school faculty in the Self-Reflection phase through involvement in the collection of evidence, providing input and feedback, and through regular progress updates.
- Overall, the time required to complete the Self-Reflection will be approximately 2 - 6 months.

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

Prior to beginning the Self-Reflection, the school will conduct a 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.

In addition to the survey data, 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. See Table 1 with key questions to help guide the discussion and development of the Self-Reflection Report.

Self-Reflection Report

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. The committee can upload or provide links to the evidence necessary to support the school's rating on each Standard 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.

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 priority areas within the Standards that it wants to emphasize for further growth and improvement. These priority areas should be any area the school needs to address to more fully align with the Standards and/or those areas the school wants to focus attention on based on school and district initiatives. It is recommended that the school identify three to five priority areas within the Standards on which to focus growth and improvement efforts. At least one of the priority areas must be related to student learning.

The school's full faculty must review and approve the results of the school's Self-Reflection. 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 the Self-Reflection, but the school is encouraged to work toward consensus with a minimum of 80 percent. The results of the school Self-Reflection must also be shared with the superintendent.

Table 1: Elements the Self-Reflection Report will include:

<p>Part 1 Look Back</p>	<p>In Part 1, provide a brief look back at milestones, improvements, and existing priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a holistic perspective, what is the faculty/school most proud of? • What has changed or improved since the last Decennial Visit related to the Standards for Accreditation? • What was not achieved that is still a priority?
<p>Part 2 Current Conditions</p>	<p><i>In Part 2, assess and review current conditions, including priorities, strengths, and needs for improvement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current status of alignment to each Standard? What are the strengths and needs for each Standard? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What teaching and learning initiatives are currently being implemented? ○ What are the school’s current priorities or areas for growth? ○ How do the school’s priorities impact the learning and well-being outcomes for students?
<p>Part 3 Capacity for Continuous Growth as a Learning Organization</p>	<p><i>In Part 3, evaluate the school’s capacity for continuous growth and improvement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What structures are in place in the school to support the school’s continuous growth? • Is there a current school improvement plan? • What additional structures will help the school implement the school improvement plan? • In what types of regular reflection and ongoing assessment does the school engage?
<p>Part 4 Goals and Vision for the Future</p>	<p><i>In Part 4, describe the school’s long-term vision and goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What goals does the school have for the future? • What is the school’s vision for each graduate? • Using the Standards as a guide, what does the faculty/school/district want to accomplish?
<p>Part 5 Priority Areas for NEASC School Growth Plan</p>	<p><i>In Part 5, identify the school’s priority areas for growth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What areas within the NEASC Standards does the school need to strengthen or better align? • What are the areas related to school and district priorities that the school is working on and wants to focus attention on further?

Step 3 – Collaborative Conference Visit

When the Self-Reflection Report is complete, the school schedules a Collaborative Conference Visit with their CPS staff liaison. 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 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 Team will consist of 2 - 4 visitors, depending on the size of the school. The team will include a CPS professional staff member and 1 - 3 other educators representing CPS.
- The Collaborative Conference Visit will include a school tour, classroom visits, and meetings with various stakeholders including the principal, superintendent, teachers, students, other personnel as requested, and the Self-Reflection Committee.
- The Collaborative Conference takes 1 - 2 school day(s) including discussion, tour, classroom visits, and report writing.

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 schools' current conditions and intended to help schools apply their Self-Reflection findings to the development of the School Growth Plan.

Collaborative Conference Report

Once the conference is complete, the Collaborative Conference 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 Plan as soon as the Collaborative Conference Visit is complete.

Step 4 – School Growth Plan

The school leadership is responsible for creating the School Growth Plan. The purpose of the School Growth Plan is for the school to outline a vision for continuous improvement and growth with specific, measurable goals targeting priority areas 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 Plan.

Elements of the School Growth Plan

The School Growth Plan is developed around the priority areas identified through the Self-Reflection phase. The priority areas should be refined based on feedback from the Collaborative Conference Visit and may also include other school or district initiatives.

Each goal in the School Growth Plan should be evidence-driven, based on identified gaps, growth opportunities, and the school's desired direction for learning. The plan should also clearly demonstrate how the achievement of each goal will impact and improve student learning through increasing alignment with the Standards.

Additionally, as part of the action steps under each goal, there should be a method designed for creating and communicating informed collaboration to achieve goals.

The School Growth Plan should include, but is not limited to:

- measurable goals that can be adjusted after assessment and reflection
- at least one goal focused on curriculum, instruction, or assessment (i.e. student learning)
- alignment with the school district's strategic plan (if there is one)
- connections to the mission, core values, beliefs, and learning expectations of the school
- each goal should include:
 - rationale (including educational research and theory of action)
 - outcomes (including process and impact benchmarks)
 - connections to the Standards
 - action steps
 - person(s) responsible for each action step
 - time and resources necessary to achieve action steps
 - methods to measure both outputs and outcomes of each goal and the evidence required to show progress/completion of the goal.

Plan Review and Implementation

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

When the School Growth Plan is complete, the school uploads it to the NEASC Accreditation Portal. The school implements its plan over the next 12 – 18 months.

Step 5 – School Summary Report for the Decennial Visit

Prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit, the school will prepare a Summary Report for the visiting team to explain the school's progress, outcomes, and next steps as a result of implementing the School Growth Plan.

As school personnel implement their School Growth Plan, they will simultaneously collect data and evidence to document the school's achievements as a result of the plan. Schools have the option of administering a follow-up survey to students, parents, and faculty members to assess growth in the identified priority areas (similar to the survey conducted during the Self-Reflection phase). This survey data could be used as additional evidence of progress and outcomes for the Summary Report.

The Summary Report can be prepared by the Steering Committee or by a separate committee formed for this purpose. See Table 2 below for key questions to help guide the development of the Summary Report.

Table 2: Elements of the Summary Report will likely include:

<p>Part 1 Look Back</p>	<p><i>In Part 1, provide a brief look back at the changes, improvements, and challenges since the Self-Reflection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has changed in the current conditions of the school since the time of the Self-Reflection Report? What has improved? • What, if any, unforeseen challenges were encountered?
<p>Part 2 Progress on the School Growth Plan</p>	<p><i>In Part 2, evaluate progress on the School Growth Plan. For each of the goal areas, please answer the following questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has the school achieved related to this goal in the School Growth Plan? • How has student learning or the student environment changed? • What is the evidence of student outcomes? • Does the goal set need to be adjusted?
<p>Part 3 Looking Ahead</p>	<p><i>In Part 3, describe what's next and the steps that will be taken for each of the goal areas within School Growth Plan.</i></p>
<p>Part 4 Capacity for Continuous Growth and Change as an Organization</p>	<p><i>In Part 4, evaluate the school's capacity for continuous growth and improvement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What structures are in place within the school to support continuous growth? • In what types of regular reflection and ongoing assessment does the school engage? • What additional structures will help the school implement the updated School Growth Plan?

Step 6 – The Decennial Accreditation Visit and Feedback

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

The Decennial Visiting Team will receive the school's Self-Reflection and Summary Reports via the NEASC Accreditation Portal prior to the visit. The size of the Decennial Visit Team and the length of the visit will be determined by the size of the school and the needs of the school related to the scope of work to be reviewed. In general, Decennial Visiting Teams will be about 6 – 8 visitors for a period of 3 – 4 days.

A NOTE ON WHAT'S NEW:

- ✓ The Decennial 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 recommendations emphasizes feedback on school growth goals.

Decennial Visit Goals

- Assess the implementation of the School Growth Plan and observe teaching and learning
- Learn about the impacts or outcomes of the stated plan, not just outputs of the plan
- Evaluate the school's capacity to be an effective learning organization, including how the school ensures continual improvement and what structures the school has in place to examine its progress on an ongoing basis.

Observation and Recommendations

During the Decennial Visit, the team members will meet with parents and other stakeholder groups, shadow students, observe classes, and review evidence related to the implementation of the School Growth Plan and other areas of the Standards for Accreditation as necessary.

The Decennial Visiting Team will provide recommendations related to elements of the School Growth Plan as aligned with the Standards. The visiting team may also make recommendations based on other areas within the Standards that are not included in the School Growth Plan if there is significant evidence of additional priority areas for growth.

Step 7 – Accreditation Decision and Continuous Improvement

Decennial Report

Following the Decennial Accreditation Visit, the visiting team chair sends a draft Decennial Report to the school. The school will have a specified amount of time to review the draft and give feedback. Once the Decennial Report is finalized, the chair sends the report to CPS and a decision about Continued Accreditation is made.

Revised School Growth Plan

The school develops a new/revised School Growth Plan based on the feedback and recommendations from the Decennial Visiting Team. The revised School Growth Plan is due to CPS no later than one year after the Decennial 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.

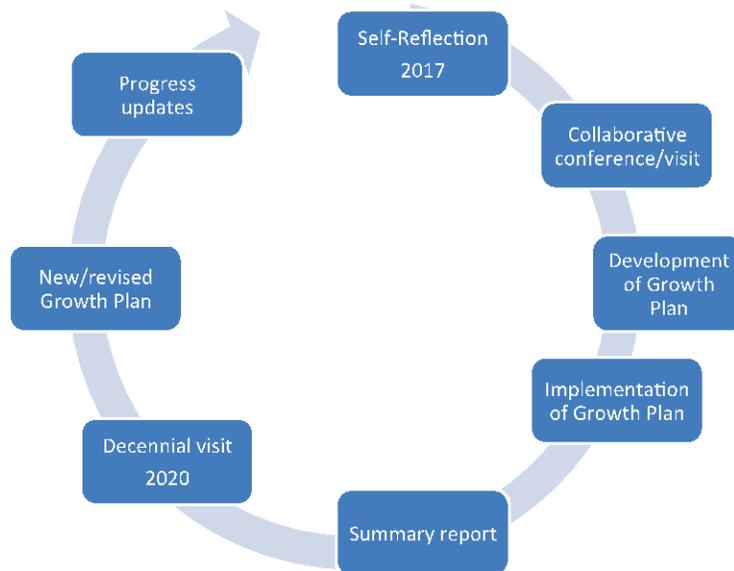
Schools will report updates about implementation of and progress on the revised School Growth Plan three years and five years after the Decennial Visit. More information about the follow-up process and NEASC events and resources will be provided to the school following the Decennial Visit.

Cycle

The Redesigned 10-Year Accreditation Cycle

2020 Schools	Decennial Year	Action Steps
2017-2018 school year	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A CPS representative visits each school to train the Self-Reflection Committee and present an Accreditation overview to the faculty. The school completes a Self-Reflection based on its alignment to the Standards and determines priority areas for growth. A Collaborative Conference Visit is scheduled with the school to discuss the Self-Reflection and proposed priority areas for the School Growth Plan.
2018-2019 school year	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report from the Collaborative Conference Visit is reviewed by the CPS. Based on the agreed upon priority areas, the school develops and implements a School Growth Plan to guide the work prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit.
Calendar year 2020 (fall or spring)	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school hosts the Decennial Accreditation Visit. The format and structure is determined in accordance with school needs. CPS determines Accreditation status following the Decennial Visit.
2020-2021 school year	Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school submits a revised School Growth Plan to CPS based on recommendations from the Decennial Accreditation Visit. The revised School Growth Plan continues to be implemented.
2022-2023 school year	Year 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school provides an update to CPS on the revised plan implementation and next steps (replaces the Two-Year Progress Report). Plan implementation continues.
2024-2025 school year	Year 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school provides an update to CPS about the progress (replaces the Five-Year Progress Report). Review core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
2026-2027 school year	Year 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school continues work on identified goals in its School Growth Plan and gets ready to repeat the cycle.

Ten-Year Cycle for 2020 Protocol



Timeline	Spring 2020 Schools	Fall 2020 Schools
Fall/Winter 2017	Complete Self-Reflection	
Winter/Spring 2018	Host Collaborative Visit Develop Growth Plan	Complete Self-Reflection
Fall/Winter 2018	Implement Growth Plan	Host Collaborative Visit Develop Growth Plan
Winter/Spring 2019	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
Fall/Winter 2019	Implement Growth Plan Write Summary Report	Implement Growth Plan
Winter/Spring 2020	Host Decennial Visit	Implement Growth Plan Write Summary Report
Fall/Winter 2020	Update Growth Plan	Host Decennial Visit
Winter/Spring 2021		Update Growth Plan

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