



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

NEASC Commission on Public Schools

Accreditation Handbook

for schools hosting a 2024 Collaborative Conference
and 2026 Decennial Accreditation Visit

A Vision for Learning

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

© NEASC 2024

Table of Contents

Ctrl+Click on a topic to jump to the page

Introduction	2
Overview of the NEASC Accreditation Process for Public Schools	2
Methodology	3
Initial Accreditation	4
Commission Structure	4
Summary	4
The Meaning and Value of Accreditation	5
The Standards for Accreditation	8
Overview of the Standards	8
Foundational Elements	9
Rubrics for the Standards for Accreditation	10
The Accreditation Process	11
Step 1 – Planning Ahead	11
The Steering Committee	12
The Self-Reflection Committee	13
Steering Committee Checklist	14
School and Community Summary	16
Developing an Accreditation Budget	17
Scheduling a NEASC Staff Visit (Liaison Visit)	20
Accreditation Timeline	21
Step 2 – School Self-Reflection	26
Self-Reflection Checklist	27
Step 3 – Collaborative Conference Visit	28
Required Elements of the Collaborative Conference Visit	29
Chair’s Preliminary Collaborative Conference Checklist	30
Step 4 – School Growth/Improvement Plan	31
Step 5 – School Summary Report for the Decennial/Initial Visit	32
Step 6 – The Decennial Accreditation Visit	32
Step 7 – Accreditation Decision and Continuous Improvement	35
Resources and Samples	36
Collection of Evidence	36
Student Work Set Cover Sheet	37
Sample School and Community Summary	38
References for school growth/improvement plan	39
Sample school growth/improvement plans and templates	39
New England State Departments of Education	40
Substantive Change Policy	41
Glossary	42
About us	45

Introduction

Overview of the NEASC Accreditation Process for Public Schools

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process for public schools is a 10-year cycle intended to serve as a guide for schools, districts, centers, and programs (hereafter collectively referred to as “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 ongoing self-reflection and the ability to be an effective learning organization.

Guiding Principles for the Accreditation Process

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools purposefully reflects on the value of accreditation and the accreditation process to better meet the changing needs of member schools. Its practices are informed by feedback gathered through numerous regional meetings, including member schools and districts, and multiple advisory committees with representatives from accredited schools and districts.

A Standards review committee drafted the current Standards for Accreditation, which were accepted at the March 2023 meeting of the Commission. The Standards have been revised to:

- emphasize further the Commission’s commitment and expectations concerning diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), reflecting NEASC’s Equity Vision
- ensure compatibility with career and technical education centers and programs
- streamline and clarify the Descriptors of Effective Practice throughout the Standards

Throughout this collaborative process, a set of tenets guided the redesign work. These underpinnings were developed based on input from member school representatives about what they want the accreditation process to provide for their schools. By using these tenets in conjunction with the [mission and core values](#) of the organization, NEASC is able to offer an accreditation process that is adaptable to the needs of individual institutions and ensure that every school, district, center, and program has ongoing support to move forward on its journey toward improvement growth.

The NEASC accreditation process:

- ensures a growth-oriented and inquiry-based approach
- promotes capacity building
- allows for creativity and differentiation
- emphasizes student learning outcomes
- 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 respective visions 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
- 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

Methodology

NEASC's serves the public and the educational community by establishing and maintaining high standards of educational excellence and supporting accreditation processes that focus on self-improvement through effective peer review.

NEASC member schools undertake a Self-Reflection process involving the participation of faculty members, administrators, staff members, students, community members, and board members. In addition, trained volunteers from the educational community work together on accreditation "visiting teams" which travel to each school to conduct on-site, objective assessments of a school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. This process includes reviewing the findings of the Self-Reflection and identifying areas of strength and making recommendations that will lead to school improvement. School personnel respond to recommendations stated in the visiting team's report by designing and implementing short-term and long-range plans for improvement.

Schools that voluntarily demonstrate their alignment with established NEASC Standards are accredited and thus become members of NEASC. However, NEASC Accreditation is not a permanent status. Member schools must demonstrate continuous improvement and alignment with NEASC Standards through a regular cycle of routine and special progress reports. Follow-up procedures are designed to ensure that all valid recommendations are acted upon in a timely fashion. NEASC expects that within five years the vast majority of the recommendations in the Accreditation Report will be completed or have a program/plan in place that will bring them to completion within a reasonable time. NEASC's general expectation in evaluating all reports is that the school will continue to make "reasonable progress" toward meeting the recommendations. This process of self-reflection provides for continuous reassessment in light of both changing school and community needs and advances in pedagogy and school administration/organization.

Important:

The heart of NEASC Accreditation is the peer review process, which depends on volunteers to staff teams. All member institutions are required to provide quality educators to serve on visiting teams for other member institutions each year.

Initial Accreditation

Candidacy

The Commission requires that a school seeking initial Accreditation first apply as a Candidate.

To become a Candidate, the school must complete an Application for Candidacy and meet the criteria for Candidacy as articulated in the Commission Policy. The application must include a narrative assessment of the school's practices as they relate to those called for in the NEASC Standards for Accreditation. Upon receipt of the application, the school should contact the Commission's Director for Accreditation and School Improvement to set a mutually convenient date for a Commission staff member to visit the school. The fee for the Candidacy Visit must be submitted with the application.

The Candidacy Visit includes a tour of the facility, meetings with administrators and faculty, and classroom observations. A written report of the Candidacy Visit to the school is submitted to the Commission along with the school's Application for Candidacy. The Commission informs the school of its decision to award Candidacy status in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Once granted Candidacy status, a school is assessed dues equal to those of member schools.

Candidacy status can be maintained for a maximum of three years. During this time, the school must prepare its Self-Reflection, host a Collaborative Conference Visit, and an Initial Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Commission Structure

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools serves elementary, middle, K-8, K-12, middle/high, high schools, and vocational, technical, and career institutions in New England. The 30 members of the Commission represent each of the six New England states and includes:

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

The Commission meets three times per year to review Collaborative Conference Reports, Decennial Accreditation Reports, and progress reports presented on behalf of member schools and those institutions seeking Initial Accreditation.

Summary

The primary goal of accreditation is to maintain a quality education for the entire student population. Accreditation ensures that through a mutually agreed-upon process there has been a third-party examination by peers of the extent to which a school aligns with the NEASC's Standards for Accreditation. The results of that assessment are then made publicly available as an indication of the quality perceived and attested to by objective professional educators.

The Meaning and Value of Accreditation

The Meaning of Accreditation

Accreditation of public schools by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges indicates that the educational institution has conducted a self-evaluation of all of its programs and has hosted a visiting team to evaluate the institution in terms of its own stated educational goals and the Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Public Schools.

The Standards for Accreditation are a research-based set of practices and concepts that provides guidance to school personnel on all aspects of the education of the young people under their care. The Standards — which are considered to be living documents — are reviewed and revised, as necessary, every five years. The process of review includes surveys of all member schools, specific consideration of feedback provided by schools that have recently undergone an accreditation visit, an appraisal of recent, relevant educational literature, and in-depth discussions at the Commission level. As needed, third parties, including consultants, are contracted to conduct relevant research to inform the revision of the Standards. The Standards reflect current trends in research on public education without espousing one particular mode of thought.

The awarding of Accreditation signifies that the school has met the Standards for Accreditation at an acceptable level and is committed to both maintain those Standards and to improve its educational program by implementing the recommendations of the Visiting Team and the Commission. Continued Accreditation is dependent upon a school demonstrating ongoing, reflective progress to improve teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning.

The Value of Accreditation

Value for Students and Families

Students are most affected by accreditation since they are the central focus of the educational process. Accreditation by NEASC assures them that their needs are being met through a quality educational program, that a vehicle exists to correct deficiencies in the school program, that their transfer credits will more likely be accepted should their family move, and that college representatives have the assurance of the quality of their preparation. Their confidence in their school and teachers, their attitude toward academic work, and their personal development are all fostered by seeing their school invite, and respond to, constructive criticism. Alignment to the NEASC Standards also ensures the singular focus of school resources on students' achievement of valued learning expectations that address academic, civic, and social competencies articulated in the school's public statement of core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

Value for Local Citizens and Taxpayers

Accreditation of a local public school by NEASC assures that tax money is supporting a school facility and programs that have been judged worthwhile by a visiting team of evaluators, both in terms of the school's stated core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate, and in terms of the school's alignment to the Standards for Accreditation. Through the process of Accreditation, the citizen is advised of the strengths, needs, and long-range plans of the school. Finally, the reputation of the community benefits from Accreditation since the retention or the loss of Accreditation has a demonstrable effect on local property values. It is quite common for principals of member schools to receive inquiries from potential homebuyers or renters in a given community seeking information about the nature and quality of programs in that community's schools. In addition to requests for information about the breadth of curricular and co-curricular programs, and about standardized and state test results, those inquiries often include specific questions about a school's Accreditation status.

Value for School Board Members

School board members are ultimately responsible for the quality of public education in their community. Accreditation assures the citizens that the board's educational policies and plans related to accredited schools are sound.

The self-reflection phase of the Accreditation process also provides an ideal opportunity for an individual board member to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the school as it undergoes the process of evaluation and Accreditation. If changes are needed, the Accreditation process highlights them.

The Accreditation process also provides the school a process that involves the entire school community in an introspective analysis of the nature and quality of school programs. The Standards for Accreditation and the self-reflection process encourage the inquiry and analysis that all organizations must embrace to be able to maintain their vibrancy and efficacy.

Value for Building Administrators and Teachers

The school's administration and teachers enjoy the professional pride of working in an accredited institution. Accreditation provides both a personal and professional opportunity to work in a collegial, reflective manner toward educational improvement. The Accreditation experience affords the opportunity for the administration and faculty to conduct and to receive a rigorous analysis of present conditions with a specific emphasis on teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning so that needed changes may be carefully planned and implemented following a reasonable timeline. Not only do individuals develop a new perspective on their own positions, but also a holistic view of the institution which affords a better understanding of their role in the operation of the school. The Accreditation process affirms the efforts of teachers and administrators by virtue of their having voluntarily subjected their professional endeavors to review and judgment by a team of their peers, using the demanding Accreditation Standards to measure the quality of those endeavors.

Results of a NEASC survey involving schools that hosted a visiting team provided positive and thoughtful responses. Cited among the most significant findings related to the impact of Accreditation on the quality of a school's educational program were: improved instruction;

enhanced teamwork and collegiality; increased focus on current research and best practice; improved organization effectiveness and long-range planning; expanded professional development programs; and increased involvement of parents and community members in the school, including their support for school initiatives. Included among narrative findings from the respondents on the benefits of the Accreditation process were: the positive impact of the Standards for Accreditation in transitioning a school to a standards-based, student-centered educational program; the stimulation of professional dialogue engendering positive change; the commitment to increased levels of academic challenge and improved student achievement; and the provision of a system of continuity that promotes educational quality among member schools.

System Administrators

The Standards for Accreditation provide a template for school review and improvement that can be combined with local, state, and federal initiatives focused both on compliance with mandates and on restructuring efforts. The Standards themselves are reflective of best practices. Although strongly based on core concepts of accountability, equity, collaboration, personalization, and student engagement, the Standards provide latitude for individual schools to design programs and services specific to the needs of their stakeholders.

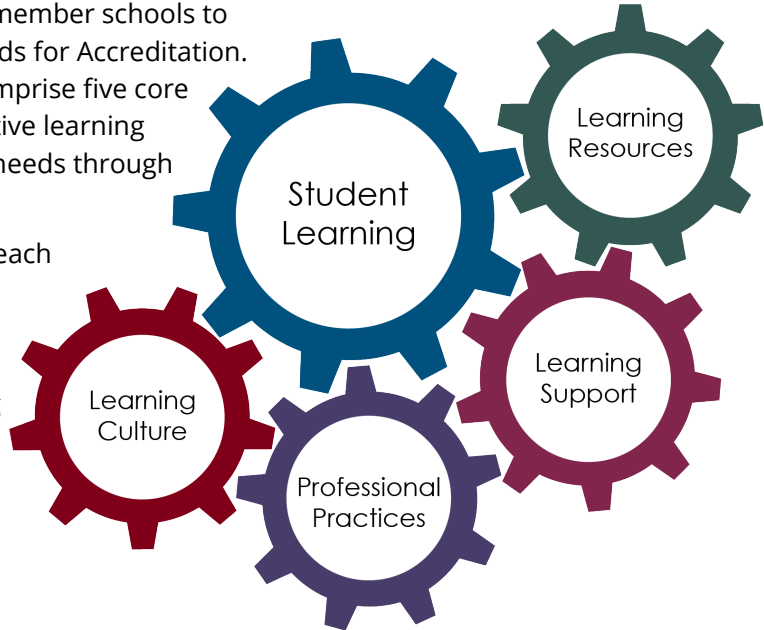
The Standards provide a template that is adaptable to local use. They provide for a cyclical review of all aspects of school programs and mandate both consistency with the school district mission and coordination of curriculum with other district schools. The Accreditation process provides a rich opportunity to integrate system programs and processes during the self-reflection phase of the decennial cycle, assess their effectiveness as part of the on-site Accreditation visits, and continue to effect changes throughout the follow-up phase of the cycle.

The Standards for Accreditation

Overview of the Standards

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Schools requires member schools to demonstrate alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. The Standards for Accreditation 2023 comprise five core Standards intended to promote an effective learning organization that can meet all students' needs through continuous reflection and growth.

In the Standards for Accreditation 2023, each Standard includes Principles of Effective Practice that define the expectations for that Standard. Schools will be asked to reflect on and report progress in aligning with the Principles for each Standard.



Standards for Accreditation 2023

<p>STANDARD 1 Learning Culture</p>	<p>Learning Culture promotes shared values and responsibility for achieving the school's vision.</p>
<p>STANDARD 2 Student Learning</p>	<p>Student Learning practices maximize the impact of learning for each student.</p>
<p>STANDARD 3 Professional Practices</p>	<p>Professional Practices ensure that practices and structures support and improve student learning.</p>
<p>STANDARD 4 Learning Support</p>	<p>Learning Support ensures that the school has appropriate systems to support student learning and well-being.</p>
<p>STANDARD 5 Learning Resources</p>	<p>Learning Resources ensure that the school has the resources necessary to meet the learning needs of all students.</p>

Foundational Elements

The Foundational Elements represent essential building blocks for each Standard. At a minimum, schools accredited by NEASC must align with each Foundational Element. Schools not yet aligned with the Foundational Elements are expected to prioritize work to ensure alignment.

Standard	Foundational Elements
<p>STANDARD 1 Learning Culture</p>	<p>1.1a The school community provides a socially and emotionally safe environment for students and adults.</p> <p>1.2a The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success.</p>
<p>STANDARD 2 Student Learning</p>	<p>2.2a There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school.</p>
<p>STANDARD 3 Professional Practices</p>	<p>3.1a The school has a current school growth/improvement plan.</p> <p>3.6a All career and technical education programs have a program advisory committee and implement a systematic program review process.</p>
<p>STANDARD 4 Learning Support</p>	<p>4.1a The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners.</p>
<p>STANDARD 5 Learning Resources</p>	<p>5.1a The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.</p> <p>5.5a The school provides a physically safe environment for students and adults.</p>

Rubrics for the Standards for Accreditation

Schools will assess alignment with each of the Foundational Elements and Principles in the Standards for Accreditation, based on evidence, using the following rubric.

Foundational Elements Rubric

Use the criteria in the rubric to determine whether the school is meeting each of the Foundational Elements in the Standards.

Meets	Does Not Meet
All criteria of the Foundational Element are evident in the school.	Some criteria of the Foundational element are not yet evident in the school.

Principles of Effective Practice Rubric

Use the following continuum to determine the school's current phase of implementation, which best describes the school's alignment with each Principle in the Standard.

Not yet evident	Elements of the Principle are not yet evident in the school.
Initiating "Thinking About It"	The ideas and concepts of the Principle are being considered by the school community but not yet in action
Developing "Working on It"	Some elements of the Principle are in place and the school has developed plans and timelines for full implementation.
Implementing "Living It"	All elements of the Principle are firmly in place in the school. Organizations or systems have been formed to support and sustain these practices.
Transforming "Shifting the paradigm"	The Principle is driving innovative and transformative practices to achieve the school's vision of the graduate.

The Accreditation Process

Step 1 – Planning Ahead

Schools are no longer required to assign all members of the professional staff to a Standard committee during the Self-Reflection phase. Schools now can differentiate the use of their faculties, assigning a representative number of education professionals 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 4-6 months.

Purpose of the Self-Reflection

The purpose of the Self-Reflection is to gather and examine sufficient evidence to evaluate the school's alignment with the NEASC Standards in year one of the Accreditation cycle. The Self-Reflection phase and related data collection inform the school's future 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.

Duration of the Self-Reflection Process

Based on myriad variables, such as the size of the professional staff, the allocation of release time, and the amount of time needed to complete existing initiatives, the Self-Reflection will take approximately 4 to 6 months.

Opinion Surveys

Prior to beginning the Self-Reflection, the school will conduct an online survey of the students, parents, and members of the professional staff. The NEASC survey provides an external perspective to help assess the school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. The complimentary survey tool will be provided to schools from NEASC. This external survey data is used as evidence during the Self-Reflection phase. The school should administer the survey in the fall or spring prior to beginning the Self-Reflection process. It is important to ensure a valid response from all those surveyed, and the Commission expects a response rate of 95 percent or more from professional staff and students and 25 percent or more from parents. The survey will also be available annually to schools interested in identifying growth areas.

The Steering Committee

The steering committee leads the professional staff through the key steps of the Accreditation process. The committee comprises the principal and 3-8 faculty members, depending upon the size of the school, and it includes two Accreditation Coordinators, whom the principal selects from the faculty.

Formation of the Steering Committee

The principal forms and serves as a member of a steering committee to oversee all aspects of the Accreditation process. The principal should have an in-depth understanding of the Standards for Accreditation. While the principal does not have specific assignments, she or he provides guidance on school policies and procedures and additional assistance where needed, such as arranging release time to work on the Self-Reflection and securing funds for the Accreditation budget. The principal should attend all steering committee meetings.

The steering committee should be a representative group of individuals who can work well with others and have effective leadership skills. Steering committees customarily comprise faculty members and administrators; however, the members need not be limited to professional staff. The principal should appoint two members of the professional staff as Accreditation Coordinators, who will lead the steering committee. An Accreditation Coordinator may be a teacher, a department head, or an administrator other than the principal. The Accreditation Coordinators must have an in-depth understanding of the Standards for Accreditation and excellent leadership ability with the talent to coordinate the work of many people.

The number of steering committee members may vary with the size of the faculty and the grade span of the school. Most committees will include between three and eight members. The committee should reflect the grade span of the school. Steering committee members act as support for the Self-Reflection committee and, in general, should not serve on other committees unless the size of the school necessitates more help on those committees. The steering committee need not be a new or special ad hoc committee; it may be a standing committee.

The Commission staff strongly recommends that steering committee members and representatives of the Self-Reflection committee serve on visiting teams to other accredited schools to broaden their understanding of the Accreditation process.

Purpose of the Steering Committee

The purpose of the steering committee is to:

- design and oversee the Accreditation process and determine how the Self-Reflection phase will progress
- develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between each of the Standards for Accreditation to help all staff members understand the Standards and process
- ensure preparation of the School and Community Summary (The steering committee will write this brief document.), and the Self-Reflection Report
- determine which groups or individuals will be responsible for the investigation and writing of Parts 1 and 3 of the Self-Reflection Report (The Self-Reflection committee will investigate and write Part 2)

- coordinate efforts to collect evidence
- provide state report information
- involve school personnel in the Self-Reflection process
- communicates consistently about the progress and next steps throughout the Accreditation process to keep the full professional staff and all school stakeholders informed and engaged
- include parents, students, and community members, where appropriate, in the Self-Reflection process
- ensure that requirements and timelines are met
- ensure that all evidence and documentation are available for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial Accreditation visiting teams when they are on-site
- ensure that all components of the Self-Reflection Report and other information is complete in the portal
- complete and implement the plans for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial Accreditation Visits
- complete the accommodation arrangements for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial Accreditation visiting team members

The Self-Reflection Committee

The school develops a Self-Reflection committee that engages in the process of self-reflection through inquiry and evidence-gathering. This committee is primarily responsible for completing Part 2 of the Self-Reflection Report, which comprises the five Standard narratives. However, the committee should find ways to include and draw information from faculty, administrators, students, families, and other stakeholders as it completes the Self-Reflection. (See Self-Reflection Guide.)

The Self-Reflection Committee:

- determines the extent to which the school is aligned with the Standards for Accreditation through a reflective process based on evidence
- is made up of various members of the school community and reviews all the Standards or, alternately, several smaller subcommittees or focus groups can be formed to assist in completing the Self-Reflection
- is representative of multiple stakeholders in the school community, such as administrators, teachers, other professional staff members, support staff members, parents, students, community members, etc.
- engages the school's faculty in the Self-Reflection phase through involvement in the collection of evidence, providing input and feedback, and regular progress updates

The committee should enlist additional help from the faculty and administration in sections in which evidence or background knowledge is needed. The committee should have a thorough discussion about information in all parts of the report and ensure that all committee members are in consensus and that the report reflects the school accurately.

Steering Committee Checklist

- A. Getting Started
- B. Self-Reflection
- C. Collaborative Conference Visit

A. Getting Started

1. The principal selects Accreditation coordinators.
2. Attend the Accreditation Seminar – the principal and Accreditation Coordinators.
3. Establish the steering committee.
4. Establish the Self-Reflection committee to investigate and write part 2 of the Self-Reflection Report.
5. Determine which groups or individuals will be responsible for the investigation and writing of Parts 1, 2, 4, and 5 of the Self-Reflection Report.
6. Contact the NEASC staff liaison assigned to the school and schedule the liaison site visit to train the steering and Self-Reflection committees and present information to the faculty.
7. Develop a Self-Reflection timeline after meeting with the NEASC staff liaison.
8. Submit the press release on Self-Reflection.
9. Order and administer the NEASC opinion surveys.
10. Ensure the inclusion of parents, students, faculty members, and support staff members in the process.
11. Ensure that the career and technical education director and faculty members are aware of their roles in the Self-Reflection process and writing of the Self-Reflection Report.
12. Apprise central office professional staff members of their roles in the Self-Reflection.
13. Prepare a budget in collaboration with the principal.
14. Make preliminary plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit.
15. Write the School and Community Summary and share it with the faculty.

B. Self-Reflection

1. Monitor evidence-gathering and check for quality and quantity of evidence.
2. Monitor the analysis of evidence by the Self-Reflection committee.
3. Monitor the development of the Self-Reflection Report and CTE program reports.
4. Distribute Part 2 of the report by Standard to the professional staff and seek comments and questions. Conduct formal presentations and vote on Part 2 using the established protocol.
5. Develop a process for gathering faculty input to develop Priority Areas for Growth.
6. Establish Priority Areas for Growth determined by the leadership team.
7. Distribute the draft Self-Reflection Report to the faculty.
8. Make final edits to the Self-Reflection Report to ensure completeness and accuracy.
9. Ensure that all elements of the Self-Reflection Report are entered in the portal using the Self-Reflection Checklist.

C. Collaborative Conference Visit

1. Review all components of the on-site visit with the chair of the Collaborative Conference visiting team, including the schedule using the Collaborative Conference Checklist.
2. Finalize hotel, meals, and other logistical arrangements.
3. Provide materials for the workroom at the school and hotel, e.g.:
 - a. Self-Reflection documents, including materials identified in the Self-Reflection Report that have not been hyperlinked (or uploaded to the portal).
 - b. laptops/printers/ large flat panel monitor or LCD projector (consult with chair)
 - c. clerical supplies
4. Prepare a list of school activities occurring during the on-site visit.
5. Prepare a list of rooms and times for small-group meetings with the visiting team based on the schedule prepared by the chair and school.
6. Prepare emergency information for the visiting team.
7. Make name tags for visiting team members and staff members.
8. Ensure staff members, other school system personnel, parents, students, and community members are available to meet with members of the visiting team based on the schedule for the visit.

School and Community Summary

The steering committee is responsible for writing the School and Community Summary. The School and Community Summary is a 750-1500-word narrative ([view sample](#)) that provides general information about the school, its location, and its place within the community.

Gather the information/data for each of the following:

- location of the town/city/district in the state
- the socio-economic profile of the community
- racial/cultural/ethnic makeup of the school district
- number of district families living below the poverty level
- number of schools in the system/district (public and independent)
- grade configuration of the school
- current student population
- enrollment stability
- expenditure per pupil for students assigned to the school in relation to state average
- percentage of local resources spent on public education
- percentage of local taxation spent on schools
- annual dropout rate stated as a percentage
- graduation rate stated as a percentage
- attendance rate of students
- attendance rate of teachers, excluding professional days
- percentage of students who attend four-year colleges, attend two-year colleges, enter directly into the workforce, and enter the military
- school/business partnerships
- school/college partnerships
- student recognition programs

The summary does not have to be approved by the professional staff; however, the staff should have the opportunity to review it and provide clarification and input.

Developing an Accreditation Budget

Many of the expenses of an on-site visit relate to the size of the visiting teams, which will vary depending on the school, district, center, or program. The size and makeup of the visiting teams should be discussed with the school's Commission liaison.

Training Seminars for School Personnel

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools sponsors Accreditation Seminars for principals and Accreditation Coordinators of schools that are about to commence the Self-Reflection to acquaint schools with the procedures.

Decennial or Initial Visit Seminars will be held in the spring and fall for schools hosting visiting teams the following season. These seminars provide some last-minute suggestions and an opportunity to ask questions. During the seminars, schools can share reactions to the Self-Reflection process with Commission staff members and discuss visiting team schedule. Schools find these meetings helpful in assuring that everything is in place for the visiting team's arrival and work.

Follow-Up Seminars are held in the spring and fall of each year for schools that hosted Decennial or Initial Accreditation visiting teams the previous season. The purpose of these seminars is to help schools organize and monitor their follow-up programs and understand the requirements for the completion of Progress Reports and responses to highlighted recommendations.

Member schools are expected to attend three NEASC-facilitated seminars with a team of three. They are the Accreditation, Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit, and Follow-Up Seminars. The Decennial Visit Seminars and Follow-Up Seminars are offered virtually and are complimentary. Accreditation Seminars may be virtual or in-person. If in-person, there will be a registration fee of \$200; if virtual, the Accreditation Seminar will be complimentary.

Re-evaluation Fee

Each school is assessed the re-evaluation fee, which is equivalent to a year's membership dues. This means once every ten years, the school will need to budget for its regular membership dues plus the re-evaluation fee, doubling the amount due that year. The school will receive an invoice at the time of the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Accommodations

Schools must budget hotel rooms for the Collaborative Conference and the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visits. Schools should reserve a single hotel room for each visiting team member, providing basic amenities such as a private bath, phone, television, and complimentary Wi-Fi. It is recommended that the school request the hotel's corporate or governmental rate for the visiting team and retain the right to return any rooms which are not used by the visiting team.

Chairs typically provide virtual training to the visiting team members so they can wait to check in to the hotel until the first full day of the visit. However, team members traveling more than an hour to the school may request a hotel room for the evening prior to the first full day of the visit.

The school will need to keep the cost of possible "additional night" hotel rooms in its budget to cover

this eventuality. While rare, the school's location may require the whole team's presence at the hotel on the afternoon before the first full day of the visit, adding an evening's accommodation for which the school must budget.

Conference Room at the Hotel

The conference room should be adequate and provide appropriate privacy and security for the Collaborative Conference visiting team for one night. The Decennial/Initial Accreditation visiting team will require the room for two nights. Please consult with your NEASC staff liaison or visiting team chair to help determine the appropriate size and amenities, such as coffee and tea service, water, a large flat panel monitor or LCD projector and screen, various clerical supplies, and provisions for AC outlets for laptops.

Meals

Breakfast and dinner should be provided in the hotel, when possible, with lunch at the school. Approximate meal costs at the hotel can be determined by consulting the hotel staff.

Visiting Team Travel Expenses

The school should pay travel expenses, such as mileage at the IRS rate per mile and tolls incurred by visiting team members traveling to and from the school site. Personal expenses are not reimbursable. NEASC does not process visiting team members' travel reimbursements, as this is an obligation of the school and district. Please discuss how this process will occur with your visiting team chair. NEASC provides a travel reimbursement form, or the team can use a form provided by the school or district. Please ensure the visiting team receives reimbursement checks as soon as possible after the visit.

Chair's Travel and Other Possible Expenses

Approximately one month before the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit, the visiting team chair and assistant chair will hold the Chair's Preliminary Visit, which can be conducted virtually or in person. Preliminary visit travel expenses (if in-person), among possible other costs, could be included in the reimbursement requests.

The Chair's Preliminary Visit is not part of the Collaborative Conference Visit protocol, but the chair may incur other pre- and post-visit expenses.

BUDGET ESTIMATES

Item	Cost
Seminars	
Accreditation Seminar (spring 2023) [complimentary if conducted virtually]	\$200
Decennial Visit Seminar (fall 2025 or spring 2026) [conducted virtually]	0
Follow-Up Seminar (fall 2026 or spring 2027) [conducted virtually]	0
Seminars Total	\$200

Collaborative Conference Visit (spring or fall 2024)	
Cost of rooms* (5 guests for 1 or 2 nights**)	\$1,500
Cost of the conference room at the hotel (1 night)	\$200
Cost of meals at hotel and school	\$250
Travel expenses for team members	\$500
Collaborative Conference Total	\$2,450

Decennial Accreditation Visit (spring or fall 2026)	
Cost of rooms* (6-8 visitors for 2-3 nights**)	\$3,600
Cost of the conference room at the hotel (2 nights)	\$400
Cost of meals at hotel and school	\$1,650
Travel expenses for team members	\$800
Re-evaluation Fee (the equivalent of one year's membership dues charged and will vary based on enrollment)	\$4,130
Decennial Accreditation Total	\$10,580

**These cost estimates do not reflect regional differences.*

*** Visitors traveling more than 60 minutes from their homes may request an additional night, the evening before the first day on site for the visit.*

Scheduling a NEASC Staff Visit (Liaison Visit)

A visit from a member of the professional staff of the NEASC Commission on Public Schools, i.e., the Liaison Visit, is a crucial part of the Accreditation process. Each school has a Commission staff liaison assigned throughout the Accreditation process. This service is provided at no cost to member schools.

The principal should contact the NEASC staff liaison assigned to the school who is identified in a letter from the director, to arrange a convenient time for the half-day liaison visit. Having the visit prior to the start of the Self-Reflection is essential in guiding the school in making the best use of its time throughout the Accreditation process.

During the visit, the staff liaison meets with:

- the principal and leadership team for a half-hour discussion
- the steering committee for a one-hour training session to highlight major points in the organization and planning of the Accreditation process
- the Self-Reflection committee for a one-hour training session to discuss its responsibilities and answer questions concerning the Accreditation process
- the entire professional staff to deliver a one-hour presentation to explain current procedures, the importance of the Self-Reflection, the role of the faculty and visiting teams, and the Standards for Accreditation

The NEASC staff liaison will schedule visits to schools hosting spring 2026 Decennial Accreditation visits in the early fall of 2023. For schools scheduled for fall 2026 Decennial Accreditation visits, the liaison will schedule visits for the late fall or early winter of the 2023-2024 school year.

Central office administrators, board/committee members, and any interested parents and students are welcome to attend the one-hour presentation to the school's professional staff, as the involvement of these groups may occur during the Self-Reflection.

In preparation for the NEASC staff visit, the steering committee and Self-Reflection committee members should read this Accreditation Handbook, the Self-Reflection Guide, and the Standards for Accreditation, all of which are available on the NEASC website.

Find resources online at
www.neasc.org/public > **Resources for Schools**

Accreditation Timeline

Timeline	Spring 2026 Schools	Fall 2026 Schools
2023 Spring/Summer	Accreditation Seminar Establish steering committee	Accreditation Seminar
2023 Fall/Winter	Establish Self-Reflection committee Complete Self-Reflection	Establish steering committee Start Self-Reflection
2023 Winter/Spring	Host Collaborative Conference Visit; Develop Growth Plan	Establish Self-Reflection committee Complete Self-Reflection
2024 Fall/Winter	Implement Growth Plan	Host Collaborative Conf Visit Develop Growth Plan
2025 Winter/Spring	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
2025 Fall/Winter	Implement Growth Plan Write Summary Report	Implement Growth Plan
2026 Winter/Spring	Host Decennial Accreditation Visit	Implement Growth Plan Write Summary Report
2026 Fall/Winter	Update Growth Plan	Host Decennial Accreditation Visit
2027 Winter/Spring	Implement Growth Plan	Update Growth Plan
2027	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
2028	Implement Growth Plan; First Report of Progress and Planning	Implement Growth Plan; First Report of Progress and Planning
2029	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
2030	3 Yr Report of Progress and Planning; Update Growth Plan	3 Yr Report of Progress and Planning Update Growth Plan
2031	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
2032	Implement Growth Plan	Implement Growth Plan
2033	6 Yr Report of Progress and Planning; Update Growth Plan	6 Yr Report of Progress and Planning Update Growth Plan
2034	Apply for Continued Accreditation	Apply for Continued Accreditation

Sample Schedule for Spring 2026 Schools

May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Accreditation Seminar (principal and Accreditation Coordinators)
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Application for Accreditation <input type="checkbox"/> Draw up tentative budget for Accreditation
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Receive letter from NEASC with date for the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize selection of Accreditation Coordinators and steering committee
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solicit interest in Self-Reflection committee <input type="checkbox"/> Select members of the Self-Reflection committee <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule date for a visit by NEASC staff liaison
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Order and administer required NEASC parent, teacher, and student opinion surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Begin work on School and Community Summary and collection of evidence
October 2023 to March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share School and Community Summary with professional staff <input type="checkbox"/> Distribute opinion survey data <input type="checkbox"/> Collect and analyze data <input type="checkbox"/> Begin plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation Coordinators contact NEASC staff liaison to update progress <input type="checkbox"/> Draw conclusions based on analysis of evidence and write Self-Reflection Report <input type="checkbox"/> Make available Parts 1 and 2 of the Self-Reflection Report for review by professional staff <input type="checkbox"/> Professional staff vote to accept Part 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Reflection committee completes the other parts of the Self-Reflection Report <input type="checkbox"/> Professional staff gives input regarding Priority Areas for Growth in Part 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership team completes Part 5 of Self-Reflection Report <input type="checkbox"/> Complete entry of Self-Reflection Report and evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Submit press release on completion of Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Principal submits the Self-Reflection Report by clicking on the Mark Report Complete button in the portal

<p>March to May 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contact Collaborative Conference visiting team chair to discuss topics on the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Make preparations for the Collaborative Conference Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Collaborative Conference Visit
<p>April to June 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chair submits draft of Collaborative Conference Report to NEASC staff liaison <input type="checkbox"/> NEASC staff liaison reviews draft and discusses it with chair; chair sends revised draft to principal; principal reviews for factual accuracy and other concerns and communicates with chair; chair prepares final Collaborative Conference Report <input type="checkbox"/> NEASC office sends completed report to principal within six weeks of Collaborative Conference Visit
<p>June to October 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership team develops school growth/improvement plan <input type="checkbox"/> School begins implementation of school growth/improvement plan <input type="checkbox"/> Principal distributes Collaborative Conference Report and school growth/improvement plan to the school board, central office administrators, faculty, and public
<p>November 2024 to December 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of school growth/improvement plan
<p>January to March 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete School Summary Report
<p>March to May 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit
<p>June to October 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with team chair to finalize Decennial/Initial Accreditation Report <input type="checkbox"/> Receive final Decennial/Initial Accreditation Report and distribute to school community and release publicly
<p>November to December 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Notification letter sent to principal, superintendent, and board chair about NEASC action on report

Sample Schedule for Fall 2026 Schools

May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Accreditation Seminar (principal and Accreditation Coordinators)
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Application for Accreditation <input type="checkbox"/> Draw up tentative budget for Accreditation
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Receive letter from NEASC with date for the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize selection of Accreditation Coordinators and steering committee
December 2023 to January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solicit interest in Self-Reflection committee <input type="checkbox"/> Select members of the Self-Reflection committee <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule date for a visit by NEASC staff liaison
January to February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Order and administer required NEASC parent, teacher, and student opinion surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Begin work on School and Community Summary and collection of evidence
February to June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share School and Community Summary with professional staff <input type="checkbox"/> Distribute opinion survey data <input type="checkbox"/> Collect and analyze data <input type="checkbox"/> Begin plans for the Collaborative Conference Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation Coordinators contact NEASC staff liaison to update progress <input type="checkbox"/> Draw conclusions based on analysis of evidence and write Self-Reflection Report <input type="checkbox"/> Make available Parts 1 and 2 of the Self-Reflection Report for review by professional staff <input type="checkbox"/> Professional staff vote to accept Part 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Reflection committee completes the other parts of the Self-Reflection Report <input type="checkbox"/> Professional staff gives input regarding Priority Areas for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership team completes Priority Areas for Growth section <input type="checkbox"/> Complete entry of Self-Reflection Report and evidence in portal <input type="checkbox"/> Submit press release on completion of Self-Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Principal submits the Self-Reflection Report by clicking on the Mark Report Complete button in the portal

<p>August to October 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contact the Collaborative Conference chair to discuss topics on the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Make preparations for the Collaborative Conference Visit <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Collaborative Conference Visit
<p>October to November 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chair submits draft of Collaborative Conference Report to NEASC staff liaison <input type="checkbox"/> NEASC staff liaison reviews draft and discusses it with chair; chair sends revised draft to principal; principal reviews for factual accuracy and other concerns and communicates with chair; chair prepares final Collaborative Conference Report <input type="checkbox"/> NEASC office sends completed report to principal within six weeks of Collaborative Conference Visit
<p>November 2023 to January 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership team develops school growth/improvement plan <input type="checkbox"/> School begins implementation of school growth/improvement plan <input type="checkbox"/> Principal distributes Collaborative Conference Report and school growth/improvement plan to the school board, central office administrators, faculty, and public
<p>January to June 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of school growth/improvement plan
<p>March to August 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete School Summary Report
<p>September to November 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit
<p>December 2026 to March 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with team chair to finalize Decennial/Initial Accreditation Report <input type="checkbox"/> Receive final Decennial Accreditation Report and distribute to school community and release publicly
<p>February to April 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Notification to principal, superintendent, and board chair about NEASC action on report

Step 2 – School Self-Reflection

The Self-Reflection phase and related data collection inform 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

Before beginning the Self-Reflection, the school will conduct an online survey of students, parents, and faculty members. The survey provides external perspectives to help assess the school's alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. NEASC will provide the complimentary survey tool. This survey data is used as evidence during the Self-Reflection phase.

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 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. Use the Self-Reflection Guide with key questions to help with the discussion and development of the Self-Reflection Report.

School and Community Summary

The steering committee is responsible for writing the School and Community Summary.

Self-Reflection Report

The Self-Reflection committee begins by reviewing the parts of the Self-Reflection Report and looking at evidence. Once the evidence has been fully deliberated and conclusions have been drawn, the Self-Reflection committee typically focuses on writing the Current Conditions section of the Self-Reflection Report. The steering committee determines the individuals or groups assigned to write the other sections of the report.

**Complete instructions for the Self-Reflection
can be found in the Self-Reflection Guide
www.neasc.org/public > Resources for Schools**

Self-Reflection Checklist

The steering committee should use the following checklist to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized. This checklist should be reviewed with the chair of the Collaborative Conference visiting team to confirm that all materials are available and meet the needs of the Collaborative Conference visiting team members.

If the Self-Reflection materials are not available for timely distribution to the members of the Collaborative Conference visiting team or are of a quality that precludes their effective use by the team, the Collaborative Conference will be postponed or canceled.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUMMARY

- School and Community Summary uploaded in the portal
- Core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate uploaded in the portal

SELF-REFLECTION REPORT

- Part 1 – Look Back
- Part 2 – Current Conditions
- Part 3 – Priority areas for school growth/improvement plan
- All parts completed and uploaded in the portal

OTHER DOCUMENTS TO UPLOAD IN THE PORTAL (OR PROVIDE TO THE CHAIR)

- NEASC opinion surveys (student, faculty, family)
- Defined criteria for success (such as rubrics) for the school's vision of the graduate
- Program of studies
- Bell and daily class schedule
- Master schedule of all classes
- Complete staff list with roles
- Letter of welcome from the principal
- Floor plan of the building
- List of emergency phone numbers (school, local hospital, emergency services, etc.)
- Address of the school and hotel for GPS directions

Step 3 – Collaborative Conference Visit

The Collaborative Conference Visit is a step in the Accreditation cycle introduced with the 2020 Vision for Learning protocol to help gather information about the school's current conditions and help the school apply its Self-Reflection findings to the development of the school growth/improvement plan.

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 visiting team will check the school's alignment with the Foundational Elements. The school will be scheduled for a Collaborative Conference Visit in the spring or fall of 2024, depending on its Decennial Accreditation Visit date. Schools can choose from a window of available time and give input on when their Collaborative Conference Visit is scheduled.

The Collaborative Conference visiting 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 visit will take two days, and the team will consist of five visitors. The team will include a chair and assistant chair and three other educators representing NEASC.

The first day of the Collaborative Conference Visit will include a school tour, classroom visits, and meetings with representative groups of various stakeholders, including the principal, superintendent, school board/committee members, teachers, students, and other personnel as requested, and the Self-Reflection committee. The second day is typically reserved for the team to complete the report and prepare for the debrief with the principal at the visit's end.

The school will pay costs for the Collaborative Conference Visit, including meals, hotel rooms, and travel expenses.

Collaborative Conference Report

Once the Collaborative Conference Visit is complete, the Collaborative Conference visiting team will share its report with the school and submit the report to the Commission on Public Schools. NEASC 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/improvement plan as soon as the Collaborative Conference Visit is complete.

Ratings for the Foundational Elements will be included in the Collaborative Conference report. Specific feedback and Next Steps for the Priority Areas for Growth will be provided at the time of the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Required Elements of the Collaborative Conference Visit

- Tour of the school building
- Classroom visits (at least 90 minutes)
- Meeting with the Self-Reflection committee* to discuss the Self-Reflection Report
- Meeting with a representative group of students
- Meeting with a representative group of parents
- Meeting with a representative group of teachers
- Meeting with central office administrators
- Meeting with building administrators
- Meeting with department leaders or other school leaders
- Meeting with student support professional staff, such as the nurse, library/media specialist, school counselors, and special education personnel

Note:

All meetings should be approximately 45 minutes, depending on the school bell schedule. Visiting team members may be asked to attend different meetings during the same block of time at the discretion of the chair.

*May be selected members of the committee depending on how the school structured the Self-Reflection process.

A sample schedule is available on the NEASC website
www.neasc.org/public > Resources for Schools

Chair's Preliminary Collaborative Conference Checklist

The following checklist should be used by the chair during planning with the school to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized and that all necessary plans for the Collaborative Conference team are in place.

1. The level of understanding of the faculty, staff, students, and community of the Accreditation process and the purpose of the Collaborative Conference visit
2. Completion of all Self-Reflection materials
 - a. accessed at the NEASC online portal at www.accportal.org/cpsvision
3. Collection, availability, and access to evidence (through the NEASC online portal and at the school)
4. Review the Collaborative Conference visit schedule (prepared by the school)
 - a. students to lead facility tour
 - b. meeting with the Self-Reflection Committee – 30 minutes
 - c. small group meetings with students, parents, central office administrators, teachers, support staff, CTE staff and teachers (if applicable) and leadership team meeting
 - d. ensure parents for the parent meeting are not employees of the district or school committee members
 - e. ensure there is a concrete plan and a schedule for classroom observations
5. Arrangements for technology use during the visit, including Wi-Fi access and assistance as needed during the visit
 - a. The workroom at the school
 - b. size, location, and furniture
 - c. supplies
 - d. name tags
 - e. a complete master schedule
 - f. LCD projector, screen, and printer
 - g. access to a copier and shredder (at the school)
6. Arrangements for lodging and meals as needed
7. An evening workspace at the hotel, such as a private room or other available confidential space
8. Parking at the school
9. Plans for reimbursement of travel expenses
10. Press releases about the visit
11. Next steps after the visit

Step 4 – School Growth/Improvement Plan

The purpose of the school growth/improvement plan is for the school to outline a vision for continuous improvement and growth with specific, measurable goals targeting Priority Areas for Growth 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 school growth/improvement plan.

Elements of the school growth/improvement plan

The school growth/improvement plan is developed using the Priority Areas identified in the Self-Reflection phase and refined based on feedback from the Collaborative Conference Visit. The plan can include other school or district initiatives. Each goal in the school growth/improvement plan should be evidence-driven, based on identified gaps, growth opportunities, and the school's desired direction for learning. The plan should clearly demonstrate how the achievement of each goal will impact and improve student learning through increasing alignment with the Standards. The action steps for each goal should be the method(s) designed for creating and communicating informed collaboration to achieve it. ([View references and plan templates](#))

The school growth/improvement plan should include:

- statement of need (what you hope to address)
- measurable goals that can be adjusted after assessment and reflection with at least one goal focused on curriculum, instruction, or assessment, i.e., student learning and aligned with the school district's strategic plan, if there is one in place
- each goal should include a school response with:
 - rationale, including educational research and theory of action, that is, how this will address student need
 - measures of success and outcomes, including process and impact benchmarks
 - alignment with the NEASC Standards
 - action steps
 - person(s) responsible for each action step
 - timeline
 - budget
 - resources necessary to achieve action steps
 - methods to measure both outputs and outcomes of each goal and the evidence required to show progress on and completion of the goal

Plan Review and Implementation

The school leaders allow faculty members to review and give input on the proposed school growth/improvement plan. The final school growth/improvement plan must also be shared with the superintendent.

When the school growth/improvement plan is complete, the school submits it to the Commission office. The school will implement its plan over the next 12–18 months.

Step 5 – School Summary Report for the Decennial/Initial Visit

The School Summary Report will be prepared by the school prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit and copy-pasted into the NEASC online portal. The purpose of the report is to provide updates and additional information related to what has happened at the school since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit. The sections of the report include the School and Community Summary, Foundational Elements, Reflection on Priority Areas, Reflection of the Principles, The School as a Learning Organization, and Planning for the Decennial/Initial Visit. (See Decennial Visit Handbook.)

Step 6 – The Decennial Accreditation Visit

Decennial Accreditation visiting teams are no longer based on student enrollment; 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 observing student learning and implementation of lessons. The scope of validated Next Steps and additional recommendations emphasizes feedback on school's Priority Areas for Growth.

Overarching principles of the visit

The primary purpose of the visit will be to determine the school's improvement and growth on its identified priorities, not necessarily improvement on or alignment with every Principle in the Standards. The visit will be organized largely based on observing and discussing the school's Priority Areas for Growth.

The visiting team will employ a growth mindset in meetings, interactions, and debriefs with school personnel. The spirit of the visit will be based on trust, inquiry, collaboration, and support. The visiting team will place a substantial emphasis on observing learning and teaching practices through classroom observations and talking with teachers and students about their work.

The visiting team will look for:

- any changes in alignment with the Foundational Elements
- progress made in implementing the school growth/improvement plan and possible Next Steps regarding the Priority Areas for Growth
- other areas of change or growth that the school has identified and on which it wants feedback
- the school as a learning organization based on the 4Cs framework: Conceptual understanding, Commitment, Competency, and Capacity

DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION VISIT CHECKLIST

The steering committee should use the following checklist to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized.

- I. School and Community section
 - Update the School and Community Summary if necessary and copy-paste it into the Summary Report in the Accreditation portal.
 - Update the core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate/learning expectations if necessary and copy-paste them into the Summary Report.
 - Upload the school growth/improvement plan.
- II. School Summary Report
 - Summary Report completed
 - School Summary Report reviewed by faculty
- III. Other documents to upload to the portal or provide to the chair
 - Program of studies
 - Bell and daily class schedule
 - Letter of welcome from the principal
 - Floor plan of the building
 - List of emergency phone numbers (school, local hospital, etc.)
 - Address of the school and hotel for GPS directions
- IV. Coordinate with the chair
 - Selection of students and/or facilities manager to lead the facility tour(s) on Monday
 - Small group meetings or observations connected to Priority Areas
 - Classroom visits, teacher or student conferences for Monday and Tuesday
 - Chair's Preliminary Visit Checklist

Please refer to the Decennial Visit Handbook for further information.

CHAIR'S PRELIMINARY VISIT (prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit)

Use this checklist to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized and that all necessary plans for the visiting team are in place.

- The awareness of the faculty, staff, students, and community of the Accreditation process and the purpose of the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit
- Completion of all materials
- Collection, availability, and access to evidence
- Meeting with school board/committee members
- The visiting team schedule (prepared by the school and the chair)
 - selection of students to lead facility tours on Monday or tour with the facilities manager or head custodian
 - Priority Area meetings
 - Priority Area observations
 - classroom visits
 - looking at student work
 - meeting with students
- Arrangements for technology use during the visit, including any laptops that may be needed, Wi-Fi access, and assistance as necessary
- The visiting team workrooms at the school and hotel. Discuss items such as:
 - size, location, and furniture
 - supplies
 - name tags for school
 - easel with paper and markers
 - a complete master schedule available in the school workroom
 - access to the curriculum documents
 - large flat screen monitor or LCD projector with screen (in both locations) and printer (at the school only)
- Arrangements for lodging and meals for members of the visiting team
- Parking at the school or transportation to and from the hotel
- Plans for reimbursement of travel expenses (school or NEASC form?)
- An overview of how the Decennial Accreditation Report is developed
- The school's responsibility for the distribution of the final report
- Press releases about the Decennial Accreditation Visit to the school

Step 7 – Accreditation Decision and Continuous Improvement

Decennial Report

Following the Decennial Accreditation Visit, the visiting team chair sends a draft Decennial Accreditation Report to the principal, who will have ten school days to review the draft and give feedback. Once the Decennial Accreditation Report is finalized, the chair sends the report to the Commission on Public Schools, which renders a decision about the school's continued Accreditation.

Revised school growth/improvement plan

The school develops a revised school growth/improvement plan based on the feedback and recommendations from the Decennial Accreditation visiting team. The revised School Improvement/Growth Plan is due to NEASC no later than one year after the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit.

Continuous Improvement and Progress Reports

The reflection, planning, and implementation process is cyclical and does not end with the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit. Schools should actively monitor evidence, assess progress, identify changing priorities or school needs, and adjust their school plans for continuous growth and improvement.

Schools will provide updates to the Commission about the implementation of and progress on the revised school growth/improvement plan one, three, and six years after the Decennial/Initial Accreditation Visit. More information about the follow-up process, NEASC events, and resources will be provided to the school following the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

Resources and Samples

Collection of Evidence

Evidence is essential to the Accreditation process. Schools are encouraged to use existing evidence in the Self-Reflection process to be as efficient as possible. Schools that have existing review of student work protocols, classroom observation protocols, professional learning communities, department meetings, and other existing structures are encouraged to use these to facilitate the gathering and analysis of evidence.

Student Work

Student work is essential to the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference process and should be incorporated into the collection of evidence. Student work collected should include:

- Work from each grade level
- Work from each department
- Work from each course level, e.g., developmental, college prep, honors, AP, etc.
- Work that reflects the school's vision of the graduate
- Work that reflects the Principles and Descriptors in Standard 2 – Student Learning

The Student Work Set Cover Sheet asks for information that helps the visiting team understand the sets of student work submitted in light of the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate, as well as the local context. Each teacher submitting a set of student work should complete a cover sheet and ensure that each set meets the expectations outlined on the cover sheet.

The teacher's reflection is an important part of the review of student work, as it puts student work into context. In the reflection, teachers should identify the extent to which the student work represents proficiency. In addition, teachers should consider which of the Principles and Descriptors in the Standards for Accreditation are evident in the student work.

Discussions about Student Work

A review of student work can be organized to inform and the visiting team's inquiry concerning student learning. Such a review could be in the form of a teacher-led conference during which a discussion about a selection of student work can be facilitated. Alternatively, students can lead discussions about a portfolio or several pieces of work, or a combined format can be employed through which both teachers and students discuss the same pieces of work with the team.

Student Work Set Cover Sheet

Teacher / Course / Grade / Level
Type of assignment (e.g., homework, group work, essay, test, project, etc.)
Skills and knowledge (e.g., learning expectation, essential question, curriculum standards, etc.)
Describe the activity or assessment and context (or attach unit or lesson plan/overview)

Attach:

1. Handout(s) given to students
2. Assessment criteria, such as a rubric
3. Three examples of student work
 - including work that is developing, meeting, and exceeding expectations
 - scoring and feedback to students

Identify the relevant Standard 2 Descriptors of Effective Practice:

<p>Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent does the student work set represent students' proficiency?• To what extent does the work set reflect elements of the Standards for Accreditation?

Sample School and Community Summary

ABC High School is located 25 miles south of the state capital, Metropolis. ABC's population is 25,900. Small service-oriented businesses dominate the local commercial economy and have replaced large factories along with two manufacturers.

The median household income in ABC is \$86,570, with an unemployment rate of approximately 4.7 percent. The latest census reveals that 6.2 percent of families fall below the poverty level, and 19.3 percent of students come from families classified as economically disadvantaged. The town is composed of 5.2 percent African American, 2.4 percent Asian, 6.9 percent Hispanic, 0.5 percent Native American, 80.9 percent White, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian, and 3 percent Multi-race/Non-Hispanic.

The school's enrollment is 1117 and serves students in grades 9-12, along with a transition program that services some students until they are 22. The population has declined almost ten percent over the last ten years. The district has three elementary schools for students in grades PK-5 and one middle school serving grades six through eight. Some students in town attend a local vocational technical high school or one of the five private or parochial elementary, middle, and high schools in neighboring towns. The school is composed of 5 percent African American, 2 percent Asian, 6 percent Hispanic, 0.5 percent Native American, 83.4 percent White, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian, and 3 percent Multi-Race/Non-Hispanic.

The average per pupil expenditure for the 2020 fiscal year was \$14,393 compared to the state average of \$17,575. The school receives over 50 percent of its revenue from the state. The operating budget for the 2021-2022 school year was initially proposed in February 2021. The proposed budget contained a 3.5 percent increase but had to be reduced to 2.3 percent. Local assessments spent on schools was 53.04 percent of the total budget. Federal, state, and local revenue resources supplement the budget.

The dropout rate was 0.8 percent, and the graduation rate was 92.9 percent. The student attendance rate for the 2020-2021 school year was 92.1 percent. Many graduates pursue post-secondary education and attend higher education institutions. The postgraduate plans of the class of 2020-2021 include 69 percent of students attending four-year colleges, 14 percent attending two-year colleges, 3 percent pursuing career education, 4 percent pursuing the military, and 1 percent taking a gap year.

Students have many educational opportunities. The school offers a diploma-granting program through an evening school, which delivers adult education courses to residents. The high school is near XYZ Community College, Purple State University, and Water College. In 2012, the school began participating in a dual enrollment program with Eureka College. Currently, 364 students have earned dual enrollment credits. Some high school teachers have been trained and students can take four classes on-site at the high school. Offerings will be expanded over the next two school years. Approximately 26 percent of students are enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The school has undertaken several initiatives to enhance every student's educational opportunities. A significant initiative fosters business/community higher education partnerships supporting student learning. For example, each fall, all senior students participate in the Credit for Life Fair, where they are given a future scenario and decide how to spend their money. In the College Essay Project, the English and school counseling departments collaborate to help students with college admissions. This program culminates with a visit from various admissions officers, in which they offer seniors specific feedback on admissions essays. Other initiatives include the mentoring/advisory program, the alumni association, career pathways, dual enrollment, credit recovery, and winter and summer schools to help struggling students.

ABCCHS recognizes students' accomplishments through the Honor Roll, Kiwanis Awards, Math Olympiad, Pride Awards, Underclassman Awards, Senior Scholarship Awards, Poetry Out Loud, Oratorical Competition, National Honor Society, various academic honor societies and exams, and scholarships.

References for school growth/improvement plan

Connecticut State Department of Education. Turnaround Office.

Retrieved January 2019 from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Turnaround/Turnaround-Office>

Hanover Research/ District Administration Practice. Best Practices for School Improvement Planning, October 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Best-Practices-for-School-Improvement-Planning.pdf>

Maine Department of Education. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/home>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Planning for Success in Massachusetts. (October 2015).

Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on International Education. ACE Learning. Retrieved from <https://www.neasc.org/ace>

New Hampshire Department of Education. New Hampshire's Story of Transformation.

Retrieved from <http://www.education.nh.gov/transformation.htm> Pipkin, Cameron.

(September 2015). Retrieved from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2015-09-09-how-to-craft-an-effective-school-improvement-plan>

Rhode Island Department of Education. School Transformation. Retrieved from

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability/SchoolTransformation.aspx> Thomas/Leaders Building Leaders. (September 19, 2016). Retrieved from <http://leaders-building-leaders.com/2016/09/19/establishing-school-improvement-plan/>

State of Vermont Agency of Education. Education Quality Assurance. Retrieved January 2019 from <https://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/education-quality>

Sample school growth/improvement plans and templates

NEASC Growth Plan Template.

Retrieved from <https://www.neasc.org/resources-schools-public>

State of Vermont Agency of Education. Retrieved January 2019 from

<https://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-cfp-eqa-cip-template-2018-2019>

New England State Departments of Education

A copy of the final Decennial Visit Report should be sent to the appropriate state department of education official:

Connecticut	New Hampshire
--------------------	----------------------

Ajit Gopalakrishnan
 Chief Performance Officer
 Performance Office
 Connecticut State Department of Education
 165 Capitol Avenue
 Hartford, CT 06106
 ajit.gopalakrishnan@ct.gov

Nathaniel Greene
 Bureau Administrator
 School Approval Program
 NH Department of Education
 State Office Park South
 101 Pleasant Street
 Concord, NH 03301-3860
 Nathaniel.Greene@doe.nh.gov

Maine	Rhode Island
--------------	---------------------

Pender Makin
 Commissioner
 Maine Department of Education
 23 State House Station
 Augusta, ME 04333
 Commish.DOE@maine.gov

Stephen Osborn
 Chief for Innovation
 Rhode Island Department of Education
 255 Westminster Street
 Providence, RI 02903-3400
 Stephen.Osborn@ride.ri.gov

Massachusetts	Vermont
----------------------	----------------

Stacy Jackson
 Program Coordinator
 Office of District Reviews and Monitoring
 75 Pleasant Street - 5th Floor
 Malden, MA 02148
 sjackson@doe.mass.edu

Heather Bouchey
 Deputy Secretary
 Vermont Agency of Education
 219 North Main Street, Suite 402
 Barre, VT 05641
 Heather.Bouchey@vermont.gov
 cc: aoe.edinfo@vermont.gov

Substantive Change Policy

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has an impact on the school's ability to align with any of the NEASC Standards for Accreditation. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact on the school's ability to align with the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be 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 guidance counselors
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support staff
- decreases in student services
- cuts in the educational media 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 or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency.

View additional NEASC and Commission policies on our website at
www.neasc.org/policies

Glossary

ACCREDITATION COORDINATORS

Working with the principal, the Accreditation Coordinators are responsible for leading the Accreditation process with the support of the steering committee. Ideally, the Accreditation Coordinators guide the process from the Self-Reflection through the Decennial Accreditation Visit.

COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE REPORT

The Collaborative Conference Report will summarize the school's alignment with each of the Standards for Accreditation, provide commendations and recommendations, and 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

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.

DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION REPORT

The Decennial Accreditation Report will summarize the school's alignment with each of the Principles in the Standards for Accreditation and implementation of the School growth/improvement plan. The report will provide the school with commendations and recommendations to guide the revision of the school growth/improvement plan and help the school further align with the Standards for Accreditation over the next 3-6 years.

DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION VISIT

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

DESCRIPTOR

The Descriptors of Effective Practice serve as guidance for schools to identify the common elements of successful implementation of each Principle of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation. The Descriptors are neither exhaustive nor required. The Descriptors provide a template for aligning with the Principles. Schools may choose to use different, equally valid paths to align with the Principles.

DISPOSITIONS

Dispositions are the patterns of behavior and thinking necessary for success in and out of school; for example, dispositions could include persistence, flexibility, empathy, courage, and accuracy.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

The Foundational Elements are the most basic conditions necessary for alignment with the Standards for Accreditation. Each Foundational Element is drawn from one of the Principles in the Standards. These elements must be in place for a school to meet the needs of students. If any Foundational Element is not fully implemented, the school must include it as a "Priority Area for Growth" in the school growth/improvement plan

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDINGS

Knowledge and understandings represent the essential knowledge and big ideas or enduring understandings that students will learn in their classes.

Knowledge includes the topics, information, and facts that are essential for students to be able to recall or access.

Understandings are the capacities to marshal skills and facts wisely and appropriately through effective application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Resource: Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives).

LEARNING ORGANIZATION

A learning organization consistently facilitates and prioritizes the learning of its members and is continuously evolving. Schools whose cultures, structures, and processes facilitate ongoing student, adult, and organizational learning are working toward becoming learning organizations. a Learning Organization (4Cs), Planning for the Decennial Visit, and updated School Improvement/ Growth Plan.

PRINCIPLE OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE (PRINCIPLE)

The Principles of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation express the essential values, concepts, practices, and structures used to guide the evaluation of the quality of school programs, services, and commitments.

PRIORITY AREA FOR GROWTH (PRIORITY AREA)

The Priority Areas for Growth reflect the NEASC Standards with which the school needs to align so that it can improve student learning, achievement, and well-being. The Priority Areas for Growth should reflect school and district priorities on which the school is working and wants to focus further attention.

SCHOOL GROWTH/IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The school growth/improvement plan is the outline of a vision for continuous improvement and growth with specific, measurable goals and action plans targeting Priority Areas identified by the school through the Self-Reflection and Collaborative Conference Visit.

SELF-REFLECTION COMMITTEE

The Self-Reflection committee is charged with completing the Self-Reflection report to determine the school's level of alignment with each of the Principles of Effective Practice in the Standards for Accreditation, the school's growth as a learning organization, and identify Priority Areas for Growth. The committee follows a process of evidence-gathering, discussion, decision-making, and writing. The Self-Reflection committee is expected to engage the entire school community in the process, including all educators, students, families, and other stakeholder groups.

SELF-REFLECTION REPORT

The Self-Reflection committee, some members of the steering committee, and other members of the professional staff write the school's Self-Reflection report, which includes five parts: Look Back, Current Conditions, the School as a Learning Organization, Goals and Vision for the Future, and Priority Areas for the school growth/improvement plan. The Self-Reflection Report is the basis for the Collaborative Conference Visit.

SPECIFIC AND MEASURABLE CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The essential criteria by which a student can demonstrate proficiency in a particular skill or disposition.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee is charged with providing leadership for the Accreditation process. The steering committee includes at least the school principal and two faculty members serving as Accreditation Coordinators. Additional members of the professional staff may be included to provide sufficient capacity for the committee to lead all aspects of the Accreditation process.

SCHOOL SUMMARY REPORT

The School Summary Report will be completed by the school prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit and includes eight parts: School and Community Summary, Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate, an update on the status of the school's alignment with the Foundation Elements, an update on the status of the school's progress on its Priority Areas for Growth, changes in the school's Principles of Effective Practice ratings since the Collaborative Conference Visit, Capacity for Continuous Growth as

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills are the essential skills students need to be able to confront new challenges both in and outside of school. These skills cross disciplines and apply in multiple contexts. Transferable skills include creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, for example.

VISION OF THE GRADUATE

The vision of the graduate is a holistic description of the transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for students to attain by graduation.

About us

NEASC Mission Statement

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

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*

Resources

Accreditation resources are available on our website at www.neasc.org/public

Contact us

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
1115 Westford Street, Third Floor
Lowell, MA, 01851 USA

Phone 781-425-7700 | Toll free (US) 855-886-3272

Staff directory: www.neasc.org/staff-directory

