

School committee NEASC Update – March, 2010

Standards committees are finishing the drafts of their reports. All reports must meet with faculty approval before becoming final. This happens through report presentation and approval process at faculty meetings. The seven standard reports will be presented and approved by the faculty by June.

Staff have thoroughly investigated and reported on all aspects of the school and are now considered “experts” in their standards. They have gathered data to support their findings and will make that data available for the visiting committee.

A brief overview of the standards is below:

- Mission and Expectations: Completed draft being presented for approval on 3/10. Examined the process for developing and integrating the mission statement and expectations for student learning. Looked at the integration of the mission statement within the culture of the school. Worked with student groups to “make the mission come alive” for students and is currently working on a learning expectations report card.
- Curriculum: completing draft and presenting for approval later this spring. Examined the depth and breadth of the curriculum offered at MHS. Looked for: consistency across teachers, classes, and levels of courses; consistency and completeness of curriculum documents; uniformity between the school-wide learning expectations and the curriculum; evidence of rigor in the curriculum.
- Instruction: completing draft and presenting for approval later this spring. Examined the quality of instruction in the school including: consistency with mission and expectations; strategies that meet students’ individual needs and promote independent and higher-order thinking; use of feedback in improving instruction; integration of technology; professional development support.
- Assessment: completing draft and presenting for approval later this spring. Examined the types and quality of assessment practices in place to ensure consistency across teachers, classes, and levels of courses and to ensure that assessment practices align with mission and expectations. Looked at the use of assessment to improve instruction; collaboration among teachers; professional development support.
- Leadership and Organization: completing draft and presenting for approval later this spring. Examined the way the school organizes learning and fosters leadership including: role of the principal; leadership roles of others in the school including students and teachers; student grouping patterns and scheduling and their connections to the mission; student load; mentoring programs; staff collaboration; safe and supportive environment.
- School resources for Learning: Completed draft being presented for approval on 3/10. By far the largest of all of the standards, this examines all of the support services available at the school including: guidance; nursing/health; special education; library/information. Look for adherence to state and federal laws; alignment with mission and expectations; support to student learning.

- Community Resources for Learning- Completed draft being presented for approval later this spring. Also examines a wide range of support for the school including: parent-school connection; community involvement; physical plant and equipment; budget process. Look for adherence to state and federal laws; alignment with mission and expectations; support to student learning.

We have begun to gather student work both for the visiting team but also as part of a larger in-house self-assessment process. The visiting team engages in a looking at student work protocol as part of their assessment of us, but we are also able to use the student work we are collecting to self-assess.

Making arrangements for the visiting team - The visiting team will be with us for four days during which they will work tirelessly to review and assess these standards. Highlights of their visit include;

- Opening reception
- Teacher interviews (formal and informal)
- Parent interviews
- Administration interviews
- Classroom visits
- Student shadowing
- Looking at student work
- Tours of the building
- Long nights at the hotel working on their reports

Our steering committee, A. Melito, M. Farrell, C. Berman, S. Fogarty, D. Wagstaff- is beginning to make the arrangements for the visit including supplies, work spaces, gathering and sending reports, and the creature comforts of meals and snacks.

New initiatives in the high school that come from the NEASC self-study process:

- LASW (Looking at Student Work)
- Core assignments and open responses- students practicing writing and communication skills in ALL subject areas
- Much more widespread use of rubrics
- Changes to the program of studies and course offerings
- Alignment of courses with school-wide expectation
- More student involvement in decision-making (mission)
- Development of a clear protocol for level changes in all courses
- In planning stages of including school-wide expectations on report cards
- Increased collegiality and interdisciplinary work as a result of teachers working together on standards committees
- Establishing focused professional development priorities for MHS