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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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May 16, 2005

Daniel Smith
Principal
South Hadley High School
153 Newton Street
South Hadley, MA 01075

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its March 20-21, 2005 meeting, reviewed the evaluation report from the recent visit to South Hadley High School and continued the school's accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Commission was impressed with many of the programs and services at South Hadley High School. Specifically, the Commission wishes to commend the following:

- the involvement of a variety of stakeholders in the thoughtful development and promotion of the mission statement
- the development of school-wide rubrics to measure student success in achieving the school's academic expectations
- the school's state-of-the-art television studio and computer-aide design lab that supports learning
- the efforts that have been made to connect classroom learning and real life experiences
- the strategies and instructional practices in many subject areas that are varied and used to connect the school's mission and expectations to student learning
- the feedback from students used by teachers to improve instruction
- the informal sharing of effective classroom practices among teachers
- those teachers who are exemplary in their course design, student involvement, use of differentiated instruction and individualized assessment (including authentic and portfolios) and who set high expectations for all students
- the effective communication of student progress to parents
- the analysis of MCAS data to improve instruction
- the use of a wide variety of classroom assessment strategies by many staff members to provide students with the opportunity to choose methods of demonstrating and understanding their knowledge
- the development and implementation of an advisory program for students in grades 9 and 10 to personalize learning

- the involvement of teachers as advisors in a substantial number of co-curricular programs
- the principal's use of collaborative decision making and his role in developing a shared common mission for the school
- the positive school culture created by the faculty and administration and embraced by the student body
- the wide range of curricular and co-curricular programs available for students
- the strong library/information services program that supports and enhances student learning
- the renovated facility that provides an environment conducive to the delivery of curriculum
- the community's commitment to pursue and implement facility improvement
- a budget process that actively involves building administrators and faculty

As well, the Commission was pleased to note the following:

- the high quality of and commitment to the self-study process

The Commission requests that school officials submit a Special Progress Report by February 1, 2006 providing detailed information on action taken to address the following:

- complete the Curriculum Action Plan of 2003-2004 and ensure that resulting curriculum documents prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide academic expectations from the mission, include course-specific learning goals, and suggest instructional and assessment techniques, including the use of school-wide rubrics
- provide adequate leadership for the development, review, coordination and articulation of curriculum
- formulate, implement, and fund a plan for increased professional development to support curriculum development, review and evaluation
- develop a plan to ensure effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district
- develop a formal professional development program guided by identified instructional needs which provides teachers opportunities to develop and improve their instructional strategies
- undertake a review of all courses to determine the extent to which they engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, emphasize depth over breadth, as well as are provided opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills, report findings from the review, and develop a plan and timeline to address identified areas of need
- fund and implement the existing mentoring program for new teachers
- ensure the library is adequately staffed, supervised and available to students and teachers both before and after school as well as during the school day
- assign clear responsibility for leadership of curriculum coordination and integration at the high school

All accredited schools must submit a required Two-Year Progress Report, which in the case of South Hadley High School is due on October 1, 2006. In that report school officials should indicate the status of all recommendations in the school's evaluation report by classifying each in one of five categories: Completed, In Progress, Planned for the Future, Rejected or No Action. In addition, they should provide a brief description of the action that has been taken on each valid recommendation in the evaluation report and include anticipated dates of completion where applicable. Special care should be taken to include appropriate information to justify the Rejected or No Action status of any recommendation.

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The Two-Year Progress Report should also provide detailed explanations regarding the manner in which each of the following highlighted recommendations has been addressed:

- identify performance indicators for the civic and social expectations in the mission
- confirm the completion of the writing of curriculum documents for all courses
- develop a process for the regular review and revision of the mission statement, ensuring students and all other stakeholders are involved
- explain how the school is using school-wide rubrics for each of the academic expectations in the mission throughout the curriculum
- develop and implement a formal process, using the faculty-developed rubrics, to assess the achievement by every student of the academic expectations in the mission
- examine and make revisions if necessary to the school schedule to ensure that it supports the effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- expand the advisory program across all grades and develop a plan to assess its effectiveness
- develop a plan, including funding, for the long-range and short-term equipment, technology, maintenance, and repair needs of the school

The Commission congratulates the school administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the accreditation program: the self-study and the evaluation visit. The next step will be the follow-up process during which the school will implement valid recommendations in the evaluation report. The Commission's Follow-Up Seminars should help you and your faculty develop a schedule for implementing valid recommendations. In addition, the Commission's *Accreditation Handbook* provides information on follow-up procedures.

The school's accreditation status will be reviewed when the Commission considers the Special Progress Report. Consistent with the Commission's follow-up procedures, the Special Progress Report should be signed by the principal and chair of the Follow-Up Committee and sent to the Commission office in duplicate by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Sincerely,



Ann L. Ashworth

ALA/mv

cc: Gus Sayer, Superintendent, South Hadley Public Schools
Ira Brezinsky, Chairman, South Hadley School Committee
Robert Fitzgerald, Chair of the Visiting Committee
Martin Gray, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools