

# GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

12 Littleville Road Huntington, MA 01050

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## *Superintendent's Corner*

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Last week the high school hosted its decennial New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) visit. This is part of the ongoing, in-depth process of maintaining the high school's accreditation that occurs over a ten year cycle. This process really never ends but cycles through a staff self-evaluation of the 7 NEASC standards (Core Values, Beliefs and Learning; Curriculum; Instruction; Assessment for and of Student Learning; School Culture and Leadership; School Resources for Learning; and Community Resources) in which the school reviews the 54 indicators in these 7 areas and provides a summary of their findings and a wide range of supporting materials. After the staff agree on, and vote to accept, these reports they are used by a visiting team of educational experts who come to the school to collaborate these findings. The visiting team (12 members for this visit) started on Sunday and stayed through Wednesday working both during the day and evening to prepare their initial report. This report then goes on for further review and a vote by NEASC on the accreditation status of the high school.

Once this vote is taken the school receives the final report and reviews it to determine next steps, i.e., whether or not we agree with the findings and how will we respond. The school staff then begin modifying the needed areas and must report back to NEASC at the 2 and 5 year anniversary of the visit. Then, just to keep things current and relevant, shortly after the 5-year report the process of reviewing and preparing for the next visit begins. Interestingly, this is the process for schools that get accreditation and don't have any significant problems as determined by the visiting team.

In order to write their reports and make their decisions, the visiting team reviews materials, interviews staff, gets guided tours of the building and infrastructure, hears presentations by staff and students, visits classrooms and generally follows up in other ways to ensure that they have multiple sources confirming what was provided to them in the school's review of the standards. Having served on several NEASC visiting teams over the years I can state with certainty that this is a daunting challenge to complete in only four days with a group of individuals that you may not have worked with in the past (these individuals may come from schools throughout New England and range from classroom teachers to librarians and from assistant principals to superintendents). The key that I've always found to the success of this visiting process is the depth, honesty and comprehensiveness of the work done by a high school staff prior to the visit.

In Gateway's case, our high school staff spent a significant amount of time researching the information upon which they wrote their reports regarding how well the school met the 54 indicators across the 7 standards (it may also be interesting to note that there is a very strong, and direct, correlation between the standards and how well 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are incorporated into the school). In the four days the visiting team was here, and in the chair's message to staff before leaving, our staff was praised for their work, the materials provided and the overall quality of their findings. While we won't have the final results for several months, I don't believe we'll see any surprises in the NEASC report as our staff pointed out both our strengths and weaknesses in their reports. It will be interesting to see what NEASC recommends for improving our high school as we continue to move forward to meet our students' needs.

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