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

January 31, 2008

Raymond G. Dewar  
Principal  
Norton High School  
66 West Main Street  
Norton, MA 02766

Dear Mr. Dewar:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its January 13, 2008 meeting, voted to accept the Two-Year Progress Report of Norton High School and to continue the school's accreditation. While the Commission acknowledges that progress has been made as noted below, until all cited concerns have been satisfactorily resolved, the school remains on warning status for the Standards for Accreditation on Curriculum, Assessment, and Community Resources for Learning.

The Commission first wished to commend the school on the following:

- the installation of 21 new unit ventilators to improve air quality issues, the plans to provide a new PA/telephone system, the installation of new outside doors, and the painting of classroom and common walls
- the installation of new computers in many classrooms
- the steps taken to improve collaboration with the middle school
- the addition of six carts with projectors and laptops, a smart board, a mobile lab for use in physics, a new Mac lab, new textbooks and a document camera
- the ongoing efforts to rework curriculum maps to prove more emphasis on higher-order thinking
- the addition of four late-start days to increase time for teachers to collaborate
- the development of common tasks in order to increase higher order thinking
- the school-wide reading of a novel in order to promote integrated learning
- professional development provided to teachers on assessment practices

- the increased time for academic coordinators to monitor curriculum and instructional practices
- the principal's efforts to ensure his vision for student achievement of the mission is clearly communicated
- the steps taken to increase access to guidance counselors, including evening hours
- the implementation of a new procedure for the timely repair of equipment
- the various grants the school has received to supplement programs including field trips, enrichment activities, interdisciplinary learning and resurfacing the track
- the approval by the school board to make application to MSBA to improve facilities
- the partnerships established with Wheaton College, Bristol Community College and Bridgewater State University

The Commission wishes to identify for school official the remaining concerns which are impacting the school's warning status:

Curriculum:

Teaching and learning:

- the loss of health classes for all sophomores

Facilities/funding related issues:

- limitations to instruction in science resulting from the lack of sufficient stations in science labs, outdated wiring, and inadequate chemical storage, and lack of sinks and gas jets in some labs
- a continued lack of reliable funding to provide adequate texts, materials, staffing, equipment, supplies, and technology needs

Assessment:

Teaching and Learning

- limited understanding by faculty of the value of the school-wide rubrics in assessing achievement of the academic expectations in the school's mission
- the lack of a formal process to assess the individual student achievement of the academic expectations in the mission based on the use of school-wide rubrics

Community Resources for Learning:

Teaching and Learning

- the misperception by some members of the community that the school has adequate resources and can operate effectively on a limited budget
- an inadequate budget which limits vision for what the school can become especially as it relates to being mission-driven, rather than funding-driven
- inadequate space for the band, due to built-in risers in the music room
- shared physical education classes due to the inadequate size of gym
- a lack of reliable and up-to-date equipment to support teaching and learning and causing frustration and feelings of being unappreciated by students and teachers

Facilities related

- limitations placed on programs, especially in elective areas, due to lack of space
- inadequate space for custodial staff
- the lack of a long-term plan to address significant facilities issues

The Commission requests that school officials submit a Special Progress Report, due November 1, 2008, describing action taken to complete the highlighted recommendations which are listed below:

- report progress on the implementation of the advisor/advisee program
- report specific progress on the implementation of the school-wide rubrics across the content areas
- develop and implement a process to assess individual student achievement of each of the academic expectations in the mission
- submit the school's short-term and long-term plans, including funding and a timeline, to provide a suitable and adequate learning space that accommodates enrollment increases, staffing needs, facility and technology needs as well as needed capital improvements
- describe steps taken to provide faculty with up-to-date equipment to support teaching and learning and assess their adequacy
- provide an update on the adequacy of the budget in meeting the instructional needs of teachers particularly with regard to texts, materials, supplies, and technology and in staffing the school, and assess the overall ability of the school to provide appropriate programs and services to meet students' needs

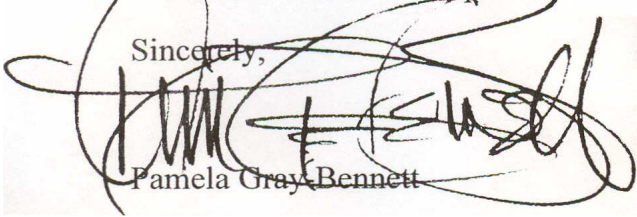
All accredited schools are asked to submit a required Five-Year Progress Report, which in the case of Norton High School is due on March 1, 2010. The report should address the highlighted recommendations listed below:

- report additional steps taken to ensure all students, no matter the course or level, are engaged in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provided opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills
- implement a process which includes a protocol for review of student work assessed by the school-wide rubrics for the purpose of improving instructional and assessment practices
- develop a process to communicate individual student progress in achieving school-wide and academic expectations to students and their families

School officials are reminded that all valid recommendations in the evaluation report should have been completed or be in the final stages of implementation when the school submits its Five-Year Progress Report. Inadequate progress to complete valid recommendations could result in a request for additional Progress Reports or probationary status for the school. The Commission requests that it be kept apprised of any substantive changes in the school before that date. For your convenience, we have enclosed a copy of the Substantive Change Policy.

Raymond G. Dewar  
January 31, 2008  
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The school's warning 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,  
  
Pamela Gray Bennett

PGB/mv  
Enclosure

cc: Patricia Ansay, Superintendent, Norton Public Schools  
Kevin O'Neil, Chair, Norton School Committee  
Thomas R. Moore, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools