

WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

NEASC ACCREDITATION
2016

The WHS NEASC Pathway

- Self-study begun prior to my arrival at WPS
- In July 2013, staff requested that we follow EDCO Collaborative lead, and withdraw from NEASC accreditation process.
- Many of the EDCO members took a moratorium from NEASC membership and/or their accreditation processes

Action on Request

- Decided against this action as the one of the first initiatives undertaken in my entry plan to Watertown
- Requested, and received a one-year delay from NEASC. The Accreditation visit was moved from 2015 to 2016.
- NEASC Steering Committee Co-chairs and Principal attended a workshop at NEASC about the process in Fall of 2013.

Accreditation Standards

7 Standards of NEASC Accreditation:

- Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- School Culture and Leadership
- School Resources for Learning
- Community Resources for Learning

Core Values, Beliefs, Learning Expectations

- Core Values and Beliefs about learning developed collaboratively
- Challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations and rubrics
- Evidence of 21st century learning that drive the:
 - Culture
 - Curriculum, instruction & assessment
- Regular review of these expectations and values

Curriculum

- Purposeful design that reflects learning expectations
- Written in a common format
- Emphasizes depth of understanding and application
- Clear alignment between what is written and what is taught
- Coordination and vertical articulation
- Staffing levels and resources support the curriculum
- Provision of collaborative time & resources

Instruction

- Instructional practices are regularly reviewed for consistency with learning expectations
- Instructional practices support 21st century learning goals
- Teachers use formative assessment to adjust practice
- Teachers use data, current research and feedback
- Teachers are reflective practitioners and engage in P.D. in content area

Assessment for Student Learning

- Common rubrics
- Communication of student and school progress
- Analysis of data to respond to inequities in achievement
- Communication to students of expectations and goals
- Rubrics in advance of summative assessments
- Range of assessment strategies
- Teachers collaborate on creation of assessments
- Timely & specific feedback to students
- Formative assessment to impact practice
- Use of a range of evidence to assess student learning
- Grading practices are regularly reviewed for alignment with core values and beliefs

School Culture and Leadership

- Safe, positive, respectful culture
- One heterogeneously grouped core course
- Connection with 1 adult in addition to counselor
- Ongoing professional development of staff
- Research-based supervision and evaluation
- Professional collaboration time
- Manage class sizes and student load
- Instructional leadership from school administration
- Teacher, student, parent involvement
- Teacher leadership and initiatives
- Collaboration and support b/w principal, superintendent, school comm
- Principal has sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school

School Resources for Learning

- Timely, coordinated intervention strategies for all
- Communications to families about support services
- Use of technology to coordinate support services
- School counseling staff have adequate licensed personnel
- School health services have adequate licensed staff
- Library/Media services are integrated into curriculum & instruction
- Support services for students with needs, on 504's and ELL's adequately staffed with licensed personnel

Community Resources for Learning

- Dependable funding for staff, programs and services
- Funding to maintain facilities and equipment
- Funding for long-range educational plan for programs, enrollment, facilities, technology, capital improvements
- Collaborative involvement in budget process
- Site & plant support high quality programming
- Documentation that facility meets all codes & regulations
- Staff engage families as partners in learning
- School develops parent, community, business and higher ed partnerships

Our Process

- Every faculty member assigned to a Standard committee or to the Steering Committee. The Principal is an advisory member of Steering Committee.
- The Faculty met to develop and affirm the school's core values (R.E.A.C.H.)
- Faculty members were invited and encouraged to serve on Visiting Teams for other high schools
- The Steering committee administered the Endicott Opinion Survey to parents, students and staff, and planned milestones for the self-study
- Each standard committee examines how the school meets the criteria under their assigned standard
- WHS 'Team 21' and 'Learning and Leadership' time dedicated to the work of the accreditation process

Process

- Standards Committees gather student work and evidence
- Results of the Endicott Survey shared with staff as one piece of the evidence
- Each Standards committee produced a report, distributed to staff in advance, presented and voted upon at a faculty meeting.
- Steering Committee planned the agenda, presentations and logistics for the March 2016 visit.

The Visit

- In March of 2016, the visiting team arrived on a Sunday morning and stayed through the beginning of the Faculty meeting on Wednesday afternoon.
- Thanks to the efforts of everyone, notably Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Maureen Regan and Adrienne Eaton, the visit went smoothly and successfully
- The team left us on that Wednesday with brief and encouraging remarks. They made special note of the extraordinarily “kind” nature of our school community

The Draft Report

- In late June/Early July of 2016, I received a first draft report from the Visiting Chair
- This was an opportunity for correction of errors in fact. We went back and forth for several weeks on some items, and later that month I received a Final Draft Report.
- I distributed the Final Draft Report to Superintendent, School Committee, Town Library, WHS Staff, Site Council, Press and posted it on our web site.
- Our Final Draft Report was presented to the NEASC Board at the end of October. Our accreditation letter was received in early December 2016.

We are re-accredited!

- Some highlights of the commendations:
 - Dynamic, collaborative process in establishing Core Values
 - Culture of School Community which supports, respects and empowers students
 - Use of Project-Based Learning
 - Common format of written curriculum
 - Personalized instruction across subjects/grades
 - Numerous opportunities for students to be self-directed learners
 - Teaching practices that apply learning to authentic tasks
 - Integration of technology into instruction

...commendation highlights

- Differentiated instruction to reach all learners
- Use of grouping strategies to empower problem solving skills
- Communication of learning goals to students
- Provision of rubrics to students prior to summative assessments
- Range of formative and summative assessment strategies
- Instructional leadership provided by the principal
- Many co-curricular activities
- Installation of the Fab Lab Maker Space

Accreditation qualifiers

- The Committee expressed concerns in 19 areas, all concerning the facility
 - As a result, we we placed on Warning Status for the standard Community Resources for Learning
- Required to submit a Special Progress Report by September 15, 2017
 - Status of facility issues
 - Plan for continual reaffirmation of Core Values
 - Develop specific criteria for measuring each school-wide learning expectation
 - Develop & implement a plan to measure those learning expectations

Next Steps

- Form a Follow-Up Committee
- Submit a September 15, 2017 Special Progress Report
- Submit a Two-Year Report October 1, 2018
- Submit a Five-Year Report

Actions in the works, so far...

- Laura Rotondo agreed to chair Follow-Up Committee
- Laura and Shirley attended a Follow-Up seminar on the next steps
- We have formed a Team 21 of the principal and several coordinators, to begin the process of researching and developing common language around 21st century expectations
- Tonight the school committee will consider whether it will submit a new SOI to MSBA for the high school
- The proposed 5-year capital plan includes significant upgrades/repairs to the WHS Facility (\$364,500 in FY18 and a total of \$10.8 million over the five year plan)