



CAPE ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL

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NOV 01 2017

October 30, 2017

Mr. George H. Edwards
Director
NEASC Commission on Public Schools
3 Burlington Woods Drive
Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

Subject: Special Progress Report for Cape Elizabeth High School

Dear Director Edwards:

Following our recent phone conversation, I have elected to file this special progress report rather than seek a postponement of the due date for this report. I apologize for the lateness of this report. I incorrectly calendared this report as being due on October 15 rather than September 15. I knew I was a little bit late. I did not realize this report is over a month late.

Introductory Context Statement for This Report

Quite honestly, since we received the NEASC report, specific work tied to the report recommendations has had to take a back seat to other work.

Specifically, our highest priority has been transitioning to proficiency-based education, grading and reporting as required by Maine law. In fact, we turned to that topic nearly as soon as the visiting team departed.

While our focus has been on proficiency work, that work has considerable overlap with some of the key areas that we need to address to fulfill many of the recommendations of the NEASC accreditation report. Here are some of the areas of overlap:

NEASC Report

Establish criteria for success tied to 21st century learning expectations

Related Proficiency Work

Beginning with our grade 9 classes this year in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, learning targets for each class have been developed and assessments aligned to learning targets. Many of those learning targets across disciplines reflect our 21st century learning expectations, including writing, research, problem-solving, and presentation

Teachers' gradebooks have been reorganized by learning

NEASC Report

Related Proficiency Work

target. Beginning with this year's ninth grade class, in order to pass their classes, students must earn overall passing grades in a course in addition to passing grades on each learning target. Progress against those learning targets is plainly visible to all students and parents through the PowerSchool portal.

Working in consultation with the Great Schools Partnership, we are working towards developing year-end scoring criteria for our learning targets. We already have many assessment-specific rubrics that provide a common approach to scoring common assessments.

Next year, learning targets will be articulated for all of our courses, not just 9th grade courses, and all teachers' gradebooks will be organized to reflect student progress against learning targets. Our teachers are hard at work this year developing those learning targets in courses outside of 9th grade English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Those learning targets do and will, in turn, reflect, the learning goals in our written curricula shared with the visiting committee.

Measure and report on student achievement of the social and civic expectations components of the school's 21st Century Learning Expectations

All of our teachers in all of our classes are now reporting separately on students' academic achievement and achievement against two Habits of Work (HOW) that are rooted in our civic and social expectations statements: submitting work on time, and coming for extra help when it is scheduled. As a result of a recent change in School Board policy, eligibility for extracurricular activities is now tied in part to academics and in part to HOW grades. The HOW grades are clearly delineated as separate columns in teacher gradebook that are easily visible to parents and students through the PowerSchool portal.

Provide professional development for writing criteria for success.

We have engaged the Great Schools Partnership to assist in developing scoring criteria for our graduation standards, which include standards tied to our 21st Century learning expectations. It is through students' meeting of our graduation standards that they will also be meeting the state's Guiding Principles, which dovetail closely with our 21st Century learning expectations.

Responses to Specific Recommendations Highlighted for Special Progress Report

Special Progress Report Recommendation 1: *Complete the development and implementation of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide writing rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement to measure the school's 21st century academic, civic, and social expectations*

We have developed a rubric defining four Habits of Work (HOW) of a successful learner. This work was accomplished through a district-wide Proficiency Based Education committee that included teachers and administrators.

This year, the high school has taken two of the most objectively measurable Habits of Work—completing work on time and coming for extra help when it has been scheduled—to form the basis of our HOW grades. Those grades are reflected in separate, clearly identifiable “H” columns in teachers’ gradebooks. They are visible to teachers, parents and students through PowerSchool and the PowerSchool portal. As noted above, the School Board has passed a revised eligibility policy tying activity eligibility in large part to HOW grades (there is an academic component, too, of the eligibility determination).

Those two HOW qualities, it should be noted, are two of our school’s civic and social expectations.

The teasing out of HOW grades is one part of our move to proficiency grading and reporting, whereby academic grades strictly reflect academic learning against the learning targets of each class. This year, our ninth grade English, Math, Science, and Social Studies teachers have completely reorganized their gradebooks by assignment categories that represent course learning targets. All graded assessments in those classes are mapped to one or more specific learning targets. Student progress against those targets, as well as overall performance, is fully visible and available to students and parents through the PowerSchool portal. Beginning with the class of 2021, students must demonstrate, in order to graduate, that they have attained the learning targets in each class. Those course learning targets, in turn, reflect and are built upon our graduation standards in each academic discipline, including the cross-cutting 21st Century Learning Expectations and Maine’s Guiding Principles.

Next year, all of our teachers will have similarly reorganized their gradebooks by learning targets. In fact, early release Wednesdays, started this year, have been used almost exclusively to identify and articulate those targets.

As one would expect, many of the learning targets that we have identified reflect the priority of our 21st century learning expectations. For example, English, Social Studies, and World Language all have learning targets reflecting writing. Social Studies and English have targets reflecting presentation. Social Studies has a target reflecting research skills, and English is developing such a target. Our arts, technology, Health and PE teachers are preparing to organize their gradebooks by learning targets connected to the themes of creative problem-

solving and critique. Math teachers already have such a problem-solving target and are reporting on it.

Last spring, through our department chair group, we began identifying common criteria for success against these cross-cutting 21st century academic skills. That work needs revision and revisiting, but it is guiding our departments as they plan for continued implementation of our approach to proficiency education, grading and reporting.

It is also our intention to expand in the future the number of the Habits of Work on which we report to students and parents. Other Habits of Work qualities that our PBE committee identified tie directly to the other civic and social expectations in our school mission. I am not certain if will add another quality next year or not, but we will in the future. Next year the major change in store is that all courses and all assessments in all grade levels will be mapped to clearly articulated learning targets, and grading will reported based on overall achievement and on achievement against learning targets. Given that major push in our PBE journey, we may hold off adding another Habit of Work quality so that we can refine our work with respect to the two Habits of Work on which we are already reporting.

Special Progress Report Recommendation 2: *Provide professional development training in writing and developing criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics.*

The school department has engaged the Great Schools Partnership to consult with our staff concerning proficiency education, grading and reporting. We are working with a “school coach,” Ted Hall, a retired principal, to act as a sounding board for our work. Ted is meeting with many departments. One of his particular areas of work is helping us with developing year-end scoring criteria tied to our learning targets.

Special Progress Report Recommendation 3: *Involve all stakeholders in the development of the criteria for success of the school’s expectations for student learning.*

All teachers are involved in the work of developing learning targets tied to our graduation standards. In fact, this is the major work of this year, in addition to the HOW work and the work of 9th grade teachers of English, Math, Science and Social Studies in organizing and reporting on their courses by learning targets.

Parents and students have not to date been involved in the process of developing these criteria for success. They have, however, been the audience for many letters and emails that have gone home explaining our new system. Students have provided feedback on how our system is working. The principal has met with every grade level in the auditorium and solicited students’ responses and concerns. One specific concern raised by students as a theme resulted in a revision to the proposed new eligibility policy tied in large part to HOW grades.

In addition to the many letters and emails that parents have received, we have held two parent forums to review our new grading and reporting system and to field parent questions

and concerns. So far, parents have been supportive. In fact, many have expressed strong support for the separate reporting on Habits of Work grades.

Finally, the principal and Director of Teaching and Learning have reported to the School Board concerning our approach to proficiency education, grading and reporting.

Special Progress Report Recommendation 4: Provide an explanation of the process and a timeline for the completion and implementation of a formal process to assess whole school and individual student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

That process is under way now, as described throughout this report. Again, the work we have described is not specifically driven by NEASC recommendations, but our approach to proficiency education dovetails nicely with many of those key recommendations as described throughout this report.


Beginning next year (school year 2018-2019) , we will be implementing reorganized grading, assessment, and reporting tied to learning targets in all of our courses.

By the end of school year 2018-2019, we should have year-end scoring criteria completed for all of our course learning targets.

Next year we will also be refining our work related to our Habits of Work grades. It is possible we will also be increasing the number of Habits of Work grades upon which we report, but it is possible that change will happen two years from now in light of all the other proficiency education-related work on our plates.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this report. Thank you for the Commission's time and energy in helping guide our school improvement process.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Shedd
Principal

cc: Howard Colter, Superintendent