



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

NEASC Commission on Public Schools

Decennial Visit Handbook

for schools hosting a Decennial (or Initial)
Accreditation Visit in the fall of 2024

A Vision for Learning

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
Commission on Public Schools

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Decennial Visit Framework

Overarching Fundamentals of the Visit

The primary purpose of the visit is to ensure that schools are accountable for improvement and growth in their identified Priority Areas and their alignment with the Foundational Elements.

The visit will be organized largely based on observing and discussing the school's Priority Areas for Growth.

The visiting team will emphasize observing learning and teaching practices through classroom observations and talking with teachers and students about their work.

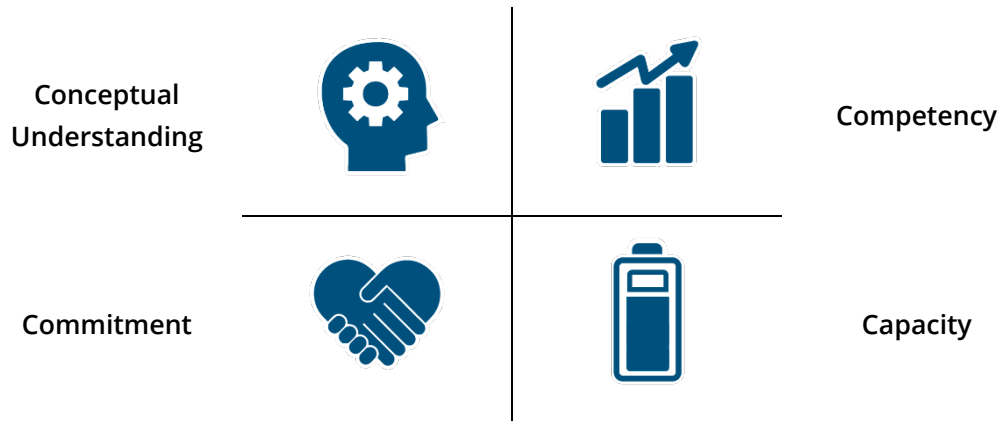
Any changes in alignment with the Principles of Effective Practice are also acknowledged.

The visiting team will employ a growth mindset in meetings, interactions, and debriefs with school personnel.

The spirit of the visit will be based on trust, inquiry, collaboration, and support.

The visiting team will look for:

- any changes in alignment with the Foundational Elements
- progress made in implementing the School Growth/Improvement Plan and Next Steps regarding the Priority Areas for Growth
- learning and teaching practices and their impact on each student
- other areas of change or growth on which the school requests feedback
- the School as a Learning Organization, based on the **4 Cs Framework**:



School Summary Report

The School Summary Report will be prepared by the school prior to the Decennial Accreditation Visit, copy-pasted into the NEASC online portal, and submitted no less than four weeks prior to the first day of the visit. The purpose of the report is to provide updates and additional information related to what has happened at the school since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.

School Summary Report Components

School and Community Summary Section

If necessary, update the School and Community Summary (from the Collaborative Conference Report) and copy-paste it into the Accreditation portal.

If necessary, update the core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate/learning expectations and copy-paste them into the Accreditation portal.

Upload the School Growth/Improvement Plan document created after the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Part 1 — Foundational Elements Alignment

Provide details on the school's alignment with the Foundational Elements and identify any changes since the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit (see [Foundational Elements Rubric](#)).

Part 2 — Reflection on the Priority Areas for Growth

Report on the progress made on all identified Priority Areas in the School Growth/ Improvement Plan from the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit using the Action-Impact-Growth framework. To analyze progress in each Priority Area for Growth, the school should describe each action that has been undertaken, the status of each action, the impact of each action, what growth/improvement opportunities each action has revealed, and anticipated future growth.

Describe each of the ACTIONS:

- What has been done, and who was involved?
- What is the status of each action? Is each of the actions completed, in progress, or planned for the future?
- How was progress for each action measured? What evidence was used? How would you rate the success of each action?

Describe the IMPACT of each of the actions:

- What impact have the completed actions had toward alignment with the Standards for Accreditation? Have any of the Foundational Elements or Principles been impacted?

- What impact have the completed actions had on the learning, achievement, and well-being of students?
- What impact might the actions still in progress (or planned for the future) have on alignment with the Standards for Accreditation or student learning, achievement, or well-being?

Describe the opportunities for GROWTH for each Priority Area:

- What are the new opportunities for growth based on the actions and impacts to date?
- What plans may have been made or may need to be made for further growth?
- What growth is anticipated because of the plans?

Include linked evidence that was used to show growth in each of the Priority Areas, e.g., documents, examples, samples, or other artifacts:

- Make the presentation of evidence user-friendly.
- Organize the evidence by Priority Area for Growth.
- Use the best representative evidence supporting the work completed to date and your explanation of the growth accomplished.
- Use the [Student Work Set Cover Sheet](#) for any student work that supports any of your explanations.

Part 3 — Reflection on the Principles

Use the [Principles of Effective Practice Rubric](#) to re-rate any of the Principles in which the rating has changed since the submission of the Self-Reflection Report.

Write a brief explanation describing any changes that occurred and why.

Part 4 — The School as a Learning Organization

Evaluate the school as a learning organization. A learning organization is committed to constant growth, consistently facilitates the learning of its members, and continuously evolves. Schools whose cultures, structures, and processes facilitate ongoing student, adult, and organizational learning are learning organizations.

Reflecting on your school as a learning organization, write a brief narrative on each of the **4 Cs** — **Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Competency, and Capacity** — as a useful way to organize reflection on the school's capacity for growth.

Consider the following questions in the response:



Conceptual Understanding

Is there a shared understanding of effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Describe the school's beliefs about learning based on documentation or implicit agreements on what the school values and prioritizes as effective learning.
- Describe the school's understanding of the key concepts within its definition of effective learning.
- What are the strengths of the school's Conceptual Understanding? What needs attention? In what ways?
- What are the logical next steps to ensure that the Conceptual Understanding fully supports the school's development as a learning organization?



Commitment

To what extent are members of the school community committed to the school's understanding of effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Explain the extent to which the school's understanding of effective learning has been endorsed by stakeholders, including educators, students, families, and the school board/committee.
- Describe the extent to which the school's understanding of effective learning influences practice.
- To what extent are members of the school community committed to a growth mindset for students, as demonstrated through documents, policies, or informal practices? For educators? For the school?
- To what extent is the school community committed to ongoing school improvement?
- What are the strengths of the school's Commitment? What needs attention? In what ways?
- What are the logical next steps to ensure Commitment fully supports the school's development as a learning organization?



Competency

To what extent do educators have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to implement effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Describe practices in place that reveal educators' competence in supporting effective learning.
- Describe the extent to which educators have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for professional collaboration.
- What professional learning has the school initiated or planned to support the implementation of the school's understanding of effective learning?
- What are the strengths within the school's Competency? What needs attention? In what ways?
- What are the logical next steps to ensure Competency fully supports the school's development as a learning organization?



Capacity

Does the school have the time, resources, and support needed to implement effective learning for students, educators, and the organization?

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Describe the time available for educators to collaborate.
- Describe the extent to which professional learning for educators is sufficient.
- Describe the extent to which educators have the necessary resources.
- Assess whether collaborative time, professional learning, and other resources are aligned with the school's definition of effective learning.
- What are the strengths of the school's Capacity? What needs attention? In what ways?
- What are the logical next steps to ensure Capacity fully supports the school's development as a learning organization?

Part 5 – Planning for the Decennial Accreditation Visit

Provide information on any specific areas for the visiting team to review more deeply concerning the current Priority Areas or any areas of growth for the future and suggest any specific areas of focus for the team's classroom observations.

Consider possible visiting team activities aligned with the school's priorities, such as specific meetings connected to the Priority Areas for Growth, observations of meetings, specific classes, etc.

Steering Committee Checklist

The steering committee should use the following checklist to ensure the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized.

School and Community section

- Update the School and Community Summary as necessary and copy-paste it into the School Summary Report section in the Accreditation portal.
- Update the core values, beliefs, and vision of the graduate/ learning expectations as necessary and copy-paste them into the Core Values, Beliefs, and Vision of the Graduate section.
- Upload the revised School Growth/Improvement Plan.

School Summary Report

- School Summary Report completed
- School Summary Report reviewed by the professional staff
- School Summary Report submitted

Other documents to link, upload to the portal, or provide to the chair

- Program of studies
- Bell and daily class schedule
- Floor plan of the building
- List of emergency phone numbers (school, local hospital, etc.)
- Directions/address for school and hotel

Coordinate with the chair

- Selection of students to lead facility tours on Monday (or tour with the facilities manager or head custodian if warranted)
- Small group meetings or observations connected to Priority Areas
- Classroom visits and teacher and/or student conferences for Monday and Tuesday (Important: All classes are made available for the visiting team to observe.)
- Chair's Preliminary Visit Checklist

Chair's Preliminary Visit Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure that the appropriate materials are prepared and finalized and that all necessary plans for the visiting team are in place.

- _____ The awareness of the faculty, staff, students, and community of the Accreditation process and the purpose of the Decennial Accreditation Report
- _____ Completion of all materials
- _____ Collection, availability, and access to evidence
- _____ Meeting with the school board/committee members
- _____ The Visiting Team schedule (prepared by the school and the chair)
 - selection of students to lead facility tours on Monday (or tour with the facilities manager or head custodian if warranted)
 - Priority Area meetings
 - Priority Area observations
 - classroom visits
(Important: All classes are made available for the Visiting Team to observe.)
 - looking at student work protocols
 - meeting with students
- _____ Arrangements for technology use during the visit, including Wi-Fi connection, access to learning and curriculum platforms, and assistance as needed
- _____ The Visiting Team workrooms at the school and hotel. Discuss items such as:
 - size, location, and furniture
 - supplies, e.g., sticky notes, easel with paper, markers, etc.
 - ongoing snacks, soft drinks, coffee, etc.
 - a complete master schedule available in the school workroom
 - access to the curriculum documents
 - large flat-screen monitor or LCD projector with screen, power strips for laptops (in both locations), and a printer (school only)
 - name tags for school
- _____ Arrangements for lodging and meals for members of the Visiting Team
- _____ Parking at the school or transportation to and from the hotel
- _____ The plan, in place in advance, for reimbursement of travel expenses (school or NEASC form?)
- _____ An overview of how the Decennial Accreditation Report is developed
- _____ The school's responsibility for the distribution of the final report
- _____ Press releases about the Decennial Accreditation Visit to the school

Student Work Set Cover Sheet

Teacher / Course / Grade / Level
Type of assignment (e.g., homework, group work, essay, test, project, etc.)
Skills and knowledge (e.g., learning expectation, essential question, curriculum standard, etc.)
Describe the activity or assessment and context (or attach unit or lesson plan/overview)

Attach:

1. Handout(s) given to students
2. Assessment criteria, such as a rubric
3. Three examples of student work
 - a. including work that is developing, meeting, and exceeding expectations
 - b. scoring and feedback to students

Identify the relevant Standard 2 Descriptors of Effective Practice
Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent does the student work set represent students' proficiency?• To what extent does the work set reflect elements of the Standards for Accreditation?

Rubrics for the Standards for Accreditation

Schools will assess alignment with each of the Foundational Elements and Principles in the Standards for Accreditation, based on evidence, using the following rubric.

Foundational Elements Rubric

Use the criteria in the rubric to determine whether the school is meeting each of the Foundational Elements in the Standards.

Meets	Does Not Meet
All criteria of the Foundational Element are evident in the school.	Some criteria of the Foundational element are not yet evident in the school.

Principles of Effective Practice Rubric

Use the following continuum to determine the school’s current phase of implementation, which best describes the school’s alignment with each Principle in the Standard.

Not yet evident	Elements of the Principle are not yet evident in the school.
Initiating “Thinking About It”	The ideas and concepts of the Principle are being considered by the school community but not yet in action
Developing “Working on It”	Some elements of the Principle are in place and the school has developed plans and timelines for full implementation.
Implementing “Living It”	All elements of the Principle are firmly in place in the school. Organizations or systems have been formed to support and sustain these practices.
Transforming “Shifting the paradigm”	The Principle is driving innovative and transformative practices to achieve the school’s vision of the graduate.

Required Elements of the Decennial Visit Protocol

SCHOOL TOUR

Students conduct a tour of the school for the visiting team. If there is a Priority Area for Growth related to facilities, then the facilities manager or head custodian should conduct a tour for one or two visiting team members.

OVERVIEW PRESENTATION

The school administrators and Accreditation Coordinators give an overview presentation that explains the school's journey since the Collaborative Conference Visit that includes progress on and Next Steps for each Priority Area for Growth and the School as a Learning Organization, i.e., the 4 Cs. Time for questions and discussion should be included after the presentation.

PRIORITY AREA FOR GROWTH MEETINGS

Small group meetings involving personnel related to the implementation of each Priority Area for Growth are conducted to discuss each Priority Area in- depth.

PRIORITY AREA FOR GROWTH OBSERVATIONS

Observations are conducted of activities related to each Priority Area, e.g., PLC meetings, RTI meetings, advisory sessions, common planning time, etc. Include any activities that authentically relate to each Priority Area for Growth and can provide additional insight into how the school has implemented each Priority Area or the related actions.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

(Important: All classes are made available for the visiting team to observe.) General observations of classroom instruction are conducted for 5-10 minutes in each classroom concurrent with Priority Area blocks. These are organized into two- to three-hour sessions on Monday and Tuesday. Team members will be looking for evidence of student learning related to the Priority Areas as well as any specific areas identified by the school.

MEETING WITH A GROUP OF STUDENTS

The team will meet with at least one group of students that reflects the diversity of the student body to discuss student learning in the school.

MEETINGS WITH THE PRINCIPAL

The chair and principal meet one-on-one daily during the visit.

MEETING WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

The chair and superintendent meet one-on-one during the visit.

MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD/COMMITTEE

A meeting with the school board/committee, or representative members of the board/committee, is held to ensure that there is support for the Accreditation process and the school's chosen Priority Areas.

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT STUDENT WORK

The team should have some opportunities to review student work. The review of student work should be organized based on the school's Priority Areas and/or questions for the visiting team. Some suggestions to facilitate this review include:

- Teacher conferences – Teachers will be asked to discuss work by reviewing a selection of student work that the teacher chooses with a visiting team member.
- Student-led conferences – Students will be asked to bring a portfolio or several pieces of work and meet with a team member to discuss their work. The meetings should be held in a common space, such as the library/media center, and a school staff member should be present. There can be 2-3 students with 1-2 team members.
- Review of student work – Samples of student work are curated by the school and organized based on the types of assessments rather than department areas to demonstrate alignment with selected Principles and/or Priority Areas for Growth.

DEBRIEF WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Similar to the debrief held during the Collaborative Conference Visit, the team chair and assistant chair, or possibly the whole team, will meet with the principal and leadership team to have a closed-door debrief about the visit and the school's Next Steps on Wednesday.

CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The chair will briefly address the faculty on Wednesday after school prior to ending the visit. This presentation could be facilitated jointly between the chair and the principal.

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS TO ADDRESS THE PRIORITY AREAS FOR GROWTH

- Constituent group meetings – Meetings can be held with individuals or groups of stakeholders who have specific knowledge related to the Priority Areas and can include parents, central office staff members, students, and teachers.
- Other – Other ideas from the school to demonstrate growth may be incorporated into the visit.

Visit Schedule

Sunday Chairs provide virtual training to the visiting team on Sunday so that team members can wait until Monday afternoon to check in to the hotel. However, team members traveling more than an hour to the school may request a hotel room for Sunday night. The school will need to keep in its budget the cost of approximately four Sunday night hotel rooms to cover this eventuality. While rare, the school's location may require the whole team's presence at the hotel on the Sunday of the visit. If this were the case, an additional day's rental of the conference room in the hotel could be necessary.

As a convenience to the school board/committee, the meeting with some members of the visiting team can be held virtually early Sunday evening, or it can be held in person on Monday or Tuesday. Only some board/committee members need to attend.

Monday and Tuesday The school, in consultation with the visiting team chair, determines the schedule for Monday and Tuesday of the visit. The goal is for the school to demonstrate its progress on the Priority Areas for Growth through meetings and observations related to each Priority Area. In addition, the team will visit classrooms to observe teaching and learning practices.

Required elements of the protocol include:

- school tour
 - overview presentation
 - Priority Area meetings
 - Priority Area observations
 - classroom observations (Again, all classes are made available to the team.)
 - chair and principal one-on-one meetings each day
 - chair and superintendent one-on-one meeting
 - meeting with the school board/committee - often held virtually on Sunday evening
 - meeting with students
 - discussions about student work
-

Wednesday Wednesday will include time for the team to finish the draft report and any necessary paperwork. The team will debrief the principal and anyone else the principal would like to be present. After school, there will be a brief faculty meeting for the chair's closing remarks.

Refer to the [Decennial Visit - Schedule Template on our website](#).

The Decennial Accreditation Report

There are several sections to the Decennial Accreditation Report. Keeping in mind what has already been reported in the Collaborative Conference Report, the Decennial Accreditation Report seeks to address the progress made by the school since the Collaborative Conference Visit and provides additional information to help the school grow and improve.

School and Community Summary

Core Values, Beliefs, Vision of the Graduate/Learning Expectations

Introduction

Part 1 – Foundational Elements Reflection

The team provides an update on the Foundational Elements and will confirm or change ratings determined at the time of the Collaborative Conference Visit.

Part 2 – Reflection on the Priority Areas for Growth

The team provides feedback on each Priority Area for Growth using the Action-Impact-Growth framework and indicates the Next Steps or new Priority Areas related to the work the school has completed so far, including impacts or outcomes of the School Growth/Improvement Plan.

Part 3 – Reflection on Student Learning

The team will provide a reflection on teaching and learning in the school based on classroom observations, meeting with students, and looking at student work. The reflection is based on Principles of Effective Practice 2.4–2.9 in the Standards for Accreditation.

Part 4 – School as a Learning Organization Feedback

The team provides feedback on the 4 Cs framework, i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Commitment, Competency, and Capacity, in relation to the school as a whole and the Priority Areas for Growth.

Part 5 – Additional information

The team will provide feedback on changes to any ratings on the Principles of Effective Practice as noted by the school, as well as any areas the school or the team identified as additional areas to be reviewed during the visit.

Part 6 – Commendations and Additional Recommendations

Commendations – The team will commend areas in which the school is aligned with the Standards.

Additional Recommendations – The team may provide recommendations based on areas in which there is room for significant improvement not already addressed in the Next Steps of the Priority Areas for Growth.

Follow-Up

Substantive Change Policy Members of the Visiting Team

Review and Release of the Final Decennial Accreditation

Suggested Procedure for Implementation of the Decennial Accreditation Report

The principal should review and discuss the Decennial Accreditation Report with:

- the steering committee to establish a framework for the Follow-Up to the Decennial Accreditation Report, including the revised School Growth/Improvement Plan, due one year after the Decennial Accreditation Visit
- the superintendent, appropriate central office staff, and the school board/committee to discuss their involvement in the planned Follow-Up process
- the faculty to discuss their involvement in the Follow-Up process
- students, parents, and community members to discuss the Decennial Accreditation Report's Follow-Up process

Reproduction of the Decennial Accreditation Report

The NEASC staff liaison will email the principal an electronic copy of the final report. The school is responsible for any duplication of the final Decennial Accreditation Report for distribution.

Distribution of the Decennial Accreditation Report

The principal is responsible for the distribution of the Decennial Accreditation Report within the school community. In accordance with the Commission's policy on The Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Team Accreditation Report, the final report must be released in its entirety within sixty days of its receipt to the superintendent, school board/committee, school professional staff, public library or town office, and appropriate news media. A copy must also be sent to the appropriate state department of education official identified on the next page.

Principal's Report Following the Decennial Accreditation Visit

Following the visit, the principal will receive an email with a link to complete the:

- Distribution, use, and scope of the Decennial Accreditation Report document
- Survey of Visit Expenses Document
- Questionnaire for Principals Document

It will be important to submit each of the documents promptly.

New England State Departments of Education

A copy of the final Decennial Visit Report should be sent to the appropriate state department of education official:

Connecticut	New Hampshire
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Ajit Gopalakrishnan
 Chief Performance Officer
 Performance Office
 Connecticut State Department of Education
 165 Capitol Avenue
 Hartford, CT 06106
 ajit.gopalakrishnan@ct.gov

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Massachusetts	Vermont
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 Barre, VT 05641
 Heather.Bouchey@vermont.gov
 cc: aoe.edinfo@vermont.gov

Samples

Sample Invitation to Parents about Involvement in the Visit

Dear [NAME OF PARENT]:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in our school's upcoming on-site New England Association of Schools and Colleges Decennial Accreditation Visit on [DATE/TIME].

Over the last several months, the school community has been preparing a Self-Reflection Report, an extensive document that demonstrates ways in which the school is aligned with the Standards for Accreditation, identifying Priority Areas for Growth, and implementing our School Growth/Improvement Plan based on those Priority Areas. The educators who will be visiting our school for three school days will be using those materials as part of their work.

An important component of the visit is time designated for visiting team members to meet with parents like you to learn about the school's programs, services, improvement areas, and your thoughts about your son/daughter's experiences at our school. Information gathered during those meetings will be shared with the entire visiting team and incorporated into the Decennial Accreditation Report they will prepare.

All members of the faculty and administration truly appreciate your involvement in the on-site visit conducted by our educational colleagues. We anticipate it will be a positive experience for you, and we sincerely value your thoughts about our school. Please see us if you have any questions or seek additional information before the visit. We would be pleased to talk with you about the visit and the role of parents.

Sincerely,

[NAMES] Principal/Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Sample News Release

The sample news release below may be sent to a local newspaper and other local media to help you publicize your participation in the NEASC Decennial Visit Seminar.

EDUCATORS ATTEND A DECENNIAL VISIT SEMINAR — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[NAME], principal of [SCHOOL NAME], [Name], teacher of [Subject], and [Name], teacher of [Subject], attended a Decennial Visit Seminar for the upcoming New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Decennial Accreditation Visit on [Date].

Sponsored by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Schools, the program was offered for principals and steering committee members of schools scheduled to host an accreditation school visit this year. The seminar provided information to help schools finalize their plans for the Decennial Accreditation Visit and to learn more about the Decennial Accreditation Report.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is a voluntary accrediting agency of more than 1500 public, independent, and international schools in the US and worldwide. Of these, over 700 are accredited through NEASC's Commission on Public Schools. NEASC works with schools to improve the quality of education through accreditation and by providing professional assistance and support for the pursuit of educational best practices. Grounded in the experience and expertise of practicing educators since 1885, NEASC Accreditation is a respected, effective, and time-tested methodology for school improvement and growth.



For more information contact:

Name: _____ School: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Date: _____

About us

NEASC Mission Statement

NEASC partners with schools to assess, support, and promote high quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and pursuit of best practices.

Commission on Public Schools Statement

The NEASC Commission on Public Schools, in partnership with its members, strives to ensure that all students experience an equitable, high-quality education necessary for their future success and well-being.

We will accomplish this mission through a cycle of continuous improvement and growth that includes:

- *quality, research based, Standards for Accreditation*
- *an inclusive, collaborative process of Accreditation*
- *an inquiry-based process of self-reflection*
- *valid and reliable feedback and assessment through peer review*
- *ongoing monitoring and professional support*

Resources

Accreditation resources are available on our website at www.neasc.org/public

Contact us

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
1115 Westford Street, Third Floor
Lowell, MA, 01851 USA

Phone 781-425-7700 | Toll free (US) 855-886-3272

Staff directory: www.neasc.org/staff-directory

