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

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December 22, 2014

Andrea M. Lavery
Principal
Portland Secondary School
95 High Street
Portland, CT 06480

Dear Mrs. Lavery:

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools, at its October 19-20, 2014 meeting, reviewed the decennial evaluation report from the recent visit to Portland Secondary School and voted to award the school continued accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Committee was impressed with many of the programs and services and wishes to commend the following:

- the commitment of teachers in the school to embedding the values, beliefs, and learning expectations into the educational environment
- the core values and 21st century skills exhibited throughout the school
- the use of the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations in guiding the decision-making process
- the dedication of district and school personnel to challenge all students to meet 21st century learning expectations
- the development and implementation of analytic school-wide rubrics aligned with academic expectations for learning
- the emphasis of the curriculum on depth of understanding and the application of knowledge through inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking skills, and authentic learning opportunities
- the teachers' willingness to develop curriculum documents
- the collaboration time allotted to teachers in the middle school, one day per week, to work on curriculum development
- the faculty and students' awareness of the school's core values and beliefs, and recognition of how they apply to instruction

- the dedication of the faculty to personalize instruction for students, provide cross-disciplinary learning opportunities, challenge students to incorporate high order thinking, and explore authentic tasks
- the use by teachers of the analysis of student data from a variety of formative and summative assessments to improve, personalize, and modify teacher instruction
- the online access to student performance data
- the collection of various data by the professional staff that informs instructional decision-making
- the extensive professional development programs and services
- the extensive technology to support teaching and learning

The Committee was equally pleased to commend:

- the safe, positive school climate
- the enrollment of all students in more than one heterogeneously grouped core course over their high school experiences
- the school's formal student advisory program
- the instructional leadership and vision shared by both principals with an academic shared focus that carries through all grade levels
- the capstone project which involves students in the community
- the leadership roles assumed by teachers in support of the school's educational programs and services
- the collaborative, reflective, and constructive working relationship between the board of education, superintendent, and the two principals
- the library/media services integration into curriculum and instructional practices
- the wide range of materials, technologies, and other student support services information offered in support of the school's curriculum
- the variety of interventions available to allow students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
- the community commitment to consistent and dependable funding for the school
- the budgetary process which includes input from teachers, department chairs, and building administrators
- the active engagement of parents and families as partners in each student's educational experience
- the completion of all but the final phase of the HVAC project
- the strong support of local businesses and community groups and opportunities for students through higher education partnerships
- the quality and thoroughness of the school's self-study

All accredited schools must submit a required Two-Year Progress Report, which in the case of Portland Secondary School is due on October 1, 2016. Information about the proper preparation of the Two-Year Progress Report was provided to school representatives at the Follow-Up Seminar and is included in *Directions for the Preparation of the Two-Year Progress Report* which can be found at <http://cpss.neasc.org>. In that report school officials are required to respond to two types of recommendations: (1) highlighted recommendations from notification letter(s) and (2) general report recommendations from the school's decennial evaluation report.

With regard to the reporting of action taken on evaluation report recommendations school officials should indicate the status of each recommendation by classifying it in one of five categories: Completed, In Progress, Planned for the Future, Rejected, or No Action. In addition, for each valid recommendation in the evaluation report there should be a brief description of the action that has been taken to address the recommendations, including anticipated dates of completion where applicable. Special care should be taken to include appropriate information to justify the Rejected or No Action status of any recommendation.

In addition to providing information on action taken to address each evaluation report recommendation, the Two-Year Progress Report should also provide detailed explanations regarding the manner in which each of the following highlighted recommendations has been addressed:

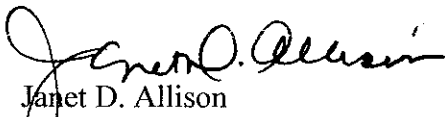
- develop and implement school-wide analytic rubrics to measure social and civic expectations for learning and ensure all school-wide rubrics identify the targeted level of achievement
- develop and implement a strategic plan (grades 7 through 12) to design and update current curriculum documents in a common format that includes: units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics
- ensure high school teachers are afforded the opportunity to formally collaborate on a regular basis in order to support curriculum revision, instructional practices, and assessment that align with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
- develop and implement a formal process for assessing school-wide and student progress of the 21st century learning expectations using the school-wide analytic rubrics
- develop and implement a process to gather individual student data from the assessments of the school's 21st century learning expectations through the use of school-wide analytic rubrics
- address the need for additional counseling services in the middle school
- develop a long-range plan that provides for funding capital improvements and articulates direction for future programs and services and evolving technology needs
- confirm the completion of the phased HVAC upgrading project

The Committee congratulates the school administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the accreditation program: the self-study and the evaluation visit. The next step will be the follow-up process during which the school will implement valid recommendations in the evaluation report. The Committee's Follow-up Seminars should help you and your faculty develop a schedule for implementing valid recommendations. In addition, the Commission's *Accreditation Handbook* provides information on follow-up procedures.

Andrea M. Lavery
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The school's accreditation status will be reviewed when the Committee considers the Two-Year Progress Report. Consistent with the Committee's follow-up procedures, the Two-Year Progress Report should include an electronic signature of the principal and chair of the school's Follow-Up Committee and be sent electronically to the Committee office at the following address: cpssreports@neasc.org. As well, please notify the Committee office immediately of any changes in the names of the principal and/or superintendent along with their corresponding e-mail addresses by submitting this information electronically to cpss-air@neasc.org.

Sincerely,



Janet D. Allison

IDA/mms(la)

cc: Phillip B. O'Reilly, Superintendent, Portland Public Schools
Christopher Phelps, Chairman, Portland Board of Education
Paul D. Daigle, Chair, Visiting Committee
Scott Giegerich, Principal, Portland Middle School ✓
Robert E. Littlefield, Chair, Committee on Public Secondary Schools