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

Director
PAMELA GRAY-BENNETT, Ed.D. (EXT. 325)
pgraybennett@neasc.org

Deputy Director
JANET D. ALLISON (EXT. 318)
jaillson@neasc.org

Associate Director
CHARLES J. MC CARTHY, JR. (EXT. 317)
cmccarffiy@neasc.org

Associate Director
ANN L. ASHWORTH (EXT. 341)
aashworth@neasc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: Martin Gray, Chair of the Commission
DATE: October 3, 2005
RE: Recommendation for Termination, Beverly High School, Beverly, MA

Beverly High School

Grades:9-12 Enrollment: 1,303 Staff. 89 District Enrollment: 4804

Initial Evaluation: 1949 Next Scheduled Decennial Visit: 2010

At its September 18-19, 2005 meeting the Commission on Public Secondary Schools reviewed the letter and materials submitted by school officials at Beverly High School in which they sought to show cause why a recommendation for termination of membership should not be forwarded to the Association's Board of Trustees.

After significant review and discussion of the school's show-cause correspondence, the Commission affirmed its decision to recommend that the school be terminated from membership in the Association for failure to demonstrate reasonable progress resolving facilities deficiencies originally identified in the decennial evaluation report and through Commission visits to the school, a number of concerns of which the Commission has judged to have a negative impact on teaching and learning as well as health and safety implications. The Standards areas of concern include Curriculum, Instruction, and Community Resources for Learning.

Given the seriousness of this recommendation, the Commission wishes to summarize for the Board the substance of the communications between Beverly High School and the Commission since the school's last decennial evaluation visit in March of 2000. Since that time, the Commission has taken action on the decennial evaluation report, three (3) Special Progress Reports, the required Two-Year Progress Report, the required Five-Year Progress Report, and three reports from visits to the school. A summary of the Commission's response to each report follows.

In September 2000 the Commission reviewed the decennial evaluation report and continued the school's accreditation, but placed the school on warning for the Standard for Accreditation on Community Resources for Learning. Concerns included the large scale deterioration of the building, its infrastructure, and its instructional equipment; the worn and unsafe non-skid treads on the stairs; inadequate lighting and light covers; the partially operational public address and intercom systems; an insufficient and outdated electrical system; deteriorating plumbing; falling ceiling tiles and foam; the rusted and deteriorated locker room; the unsafe TV lab; open vents in lavatories; the lack of stall doors in lavatories; cloudy plastic windows; peeling exterior paint; the absence of full Internet access in computer labs; the inadequate number of computers in classrooms; the lack of a long-term technology plan; the lack of sufficient funds to support continued growth and technical support in the area of technology; the lack of handicapped

accessibility of the upper gym and girls' locker room; and the padlocking of doors exiting to athletic fields during the school day.

The Commission requested a Special Progress Report with recommendations related to the following: develop and begin to implement a long-range facility plan to address the deteriorating condition of the facility, its infrastructure, and instructional equipment; immediately address all identified health and safety issues; develop, fund, and begin to implement a long-range technology plan; develop and begin to implement a plan to ensure handicapped accessibility to the upper gym and girls' locker room; and to immediately desist in the practice of padlocking doors leading to the athletic fields.

The Commission continued the school on warning following the review of the school's first Special Progress Report in September 2001. At the time the Commission commended work to date developing a schedule of renovations that included a feasibility study, the revision of the school technology plan, the provision of Internet access in computer labs, the replacement or repair of many school doors, and the submission of evidence related to compliance with ADA regulations. Among other recommendations related to other Standards for Accreditation, the Commission also identified a number of recommendations related to its facilities concerns, specifically the following: provide an update on the long-range facility plan intended to address the deteriorating condition of the facility; provide an update on the implementation of the technology plan and on teachers' instructional use of technology.

In January 2003 the Commission reviewed the school's Two-Year Progress Report and voted to defer action pending a Commission-Directed Visit to the school for the purpose of learning firsthand the extent of the facilities problems at Beverly High School, particularly infrastructure concerns, security concerns, handicapped accessibility, electrical and plumbing needs, public address system needs, and heating and ventilation problems.

In March of 2003 the Commission reviewed the Deferred Two-Year Progress Report and Report of a Commission Directed Visit. The Commission expressed grave concern that in the three years since the school's decennial evaluation the community of Beverly had failed to develop and fund a facility plan to address the deteriorating condition of Beverly High School. Further, the Commission concluded that the condition of Beverly High School had a significant negative impact on teaching and learning.

The Commission identified numerous infrastructure and health and safety concerns regarding Beverly High School as well as concerns that negatively impact teaching and learning. From among too many to be cited, the Commission identified the following:

- significant cracks in exterior walls and structural columns that are so severe that daylight can be seen through them from inside the building
- significant water infiltration around windows, structural columns, and exterior panels throughout the building
- electrical system failures in underground conduits necessitating the snaking of electrical lines overhead
- cracks around a significant percentage of building windows
- patches and repairs that don't hold on windows, walls, and floors
- rusted pipes along outside walls which burst and otherwise fail
- building flooding in the wings at the lowest elevation
- outdated, inadequate windows
- inadequate heating and ventilation systems
- an inadequate fire alarm system
- an inadequate intercom system
- the storage of books in bathrooms leading to water damage and mildew damage

- the snaking of telephone and cable wires along corridors
- floor tiles in constant need of replacement
- the inordinate amount of time, attention, and resources that are being poured into trying to stay ahead of the damages caused by water
- an inadequate and unsafe electrical system, including inadequate electrical outlets, necessitating the use of extension cords in classrooms and frequently resulting in the overloading of circuits
- roof leaks
- poor ventilation for arts instruction
- inadequate science classrooms which in some instances lack sinks
- hallways that lack adequate heat
- inadequate ventilation in the biology and physics classrooms
- poor heat regulation in classrooms
- the transporting of science chemicals and glassware through corridors and along stairways during student passing
- the tripping hazard surrounding the use of extension cords
- inappropriate eyewash and exhaust capabilities in science classrooms
- the necessity of moving some classes to conduct the required curriculum
- the necessity of omitting demonstrations because of the lack of space or time to assemble safely and store apparatus in non-dedicated science classrooms
- insufficient power when many appliances are on at the same time causing the tripping of the circuit breaker in culinary arts
- unworkable computer network outlets
- numerous instances of oppressive heat causing student drowsiness
- the lack of lockable storage space
- inadequate lighting and window shades in the library media center resulting in difficulty reading and solar glare
- lack of access to the stage and backstage areas due to safety concerns
- lack of adequate technology stations
- inadequate lighting in the auditorium
- antiquated stage works and technical systems
- poor lighting in the Upper Gym and Field House
- leaks in the ceiling in the Upper Gym and Field House
- the worn and slippery floor in the Field House
- peeling paint in the Field House and Upper Gym

The Commission acknowledged the fact that in July 2002 the school system received the results of a Feasibility Study for Beverly High School which confirmed significant issues relating to cracks in exterior walls, significant water infiltration through exterior walls, building flooding during extreme storms, electrical system failures in underground conduit, frequent failures in heating system piping, and the considerable maintenance required for most engineering building systems.

The Commission noted that despite receiving confirmation of significant problems through a feasibility study, school officials and the Beverly community failed to develop and fund a facilities plan, be it through renovation or new construction, to address the deteriorating condition of Beverly High School.

The Commission did, however, commend, among other things, the following facilities related actions:

- progress implementing the technology plan and teacher's instructional use of technology
- the installation of new boilers

- the school committee vote in favor of an order to City Council which would appropriate \$734,000 for a schematic design for a new Beverly High School subject to a successful debt exclusion and/or the School Committee assuming responsibility for the debt when payments begin
- the hiring of another architect to provide cost estimates for renovations to the current Beverly High School
- the volunteer work of parents to paint, landscape, and install white board in classrooms
- the painting of much of the exterior trim of the school
- the replacement of 25 exterior doors

The Commission voted to recommend to the Board of Trustees of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges that the school be placed on probation because of significant deficiencies in its adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation on Curriculum, Instruction, and Community Resources for Learning.

The Commission requested a second Special Progress Report on actions taken to fully fund a plan and provide a timeline to resolve all cited facilities problems at the high school as well as to address other recommendations. The Commission also identified a number of recommendations related to the required Five-Year Progress Report.

On May 9, 2003 school officials informed the Commission that they chose not to show cause why the school should not be placed on probation. Accordingly, on May 15, 2003 the Association's Board of Trustees reviewed the Commission's recommendation and voted to place the school on probation for the Standards for Accreditation on Curriculum, Instruction, and Community Resources for Learning.

In January 2004 the Commission reviewed the school's second Special Progress Report and continued the school on probation for the Standards on Curriculum, Instruction, and Community Resources for Learning. The notification letter to the school expressed the Commission's concern that the Beverly school community had failed to come to agreement on a resolution of serious school facilities concerns at the high school and asked for a third Special Progress Report providing an update on the development of plans and timelines to fully resolve cited facilities issues in a timely fashion.

In September 2004 the Commission reviewed the school's third Special Progress Report and again continued the school on probation for the same Standards. It did commend the City Council's commitment to some short-term repairs and to a long-term solution to the Commission's concerns, as well as the repair of the field house roof, plumbing, stage rigging, and ventilation systems, the installation of new boilers and a boiler water feed treatment system, and plans to repair and reopen bathrooms in the school.

The Commission noted that the proposed timeline for reconstruction and new construction indicated that the earliest date Beverly students could benefit from an updated facility would be September 2008. The Commission stated that such a timeline was unacceptable because it required that a generation of students continue to be educated in the current facility which, despite recent improvements, is substandard and inadequate to accommodate the teaching and learning needs of teachers and students.

The Commission asked that in the Five-Year Progress Report school officials submit a revised plan and clear timeline that demonstrate a timely resolution of the concerns that prompted the school's probationary status as stated in the Commission's correspondence dated April 3, 2003 and which ensure that the students at Beverly High School are being educated in a facility that is healthy and safe and which supports teaching and learning. The Commission further requested that prior to the Commission's June 2005 meeting Pamela Gray-Bennett schedule another visit to the school to observe first-hand all improvements to the facility and to discuss the school's revised plan and timeline.

The Commission reviewed the school's Five-Year Progress at its June 2005 meeting as well as the information from the Directed Visit to the school on May 18, 2005.

The Commission commended school officials for school improvement initiatives not related to Commission concerns with the facility of Beverly High School, specifically the following:

- the submission of school-wide rubrics for the academic expectations
- the development of partial performance indicators for the civic/social expectations
- the development of a curriculum review and leadership plan that aligns the mission statement and student expectations with the state frameworks
- the revision of the school's mission statement and student expectations
- the development of a plan that provides for regular review of the mission statement
- the utilization of the mission statement to drive professional development
- the addition of a guidance counselor and an adjustment counselor
- the introduction of two new AP courses and Virtual High School
- staff training by the anti-defamation league
- the music keyboarding lab
- the addition of the television studio in the Patten Wing.
- the curriculum alignment and coordination between the high school and middle schools
- the addition of course offerings provided to students
- the funding of the technology plan
- the commitment to schedule sequential courses to minimize student disconnect based on scheduling issues
- the elimination of the majority of academic study periods
- the additional in-service days that allow staff to discuss instructional strategies and curriculum coordination
- the provision of time for the necessary feedback between special education and classroom teachers
- the additional training provided to the staff in the area of teacher evaluation
- the movement toward grouping patterns that foster heterogeneity in core academic areas
- the supervision and evaluation of counselors by a guidance professional
- the additional monies provided to support the print and non-print media collection

The Commission also noted the approval of the Beverly City Council of funding of up to \$3.6 million for expenses related to the design and pre-construction costs related to a construction/ renovation project for Beverly High School. Further, the Commission wished to acknowledge the widespread confidence of school and city officials, including the Mayor, that the approval of such funds is a significant step for the Beverly community, signally the first stage in the process of securing local and state funding for a \$60 million project to fully address facilities concerns at the high school through construction of a new academic wing, demolition of the existing academic wing, and refurbishment of common spaces (field house, auditorium, and cafeteria). The Commission noted as well the Mayor's stated intention to pay for the project from monies generated by known new growth revenue sources prior to reimbursement by the state at least to the 50% level. Finally, the Commission acknowledged repairs to the field house, the installation of new boilers, installation of new valves and thermostats, the implementation of boiler water feed treatment, the repair of heating system water leaks, proper service of the pneumatic control system, the addressing of circular pump problems, the correction of leaking water piping in the library, and the reinstallation of damper actuators on the existing dampers.

The Commission noted, however, that neither the approval of monies to fund the design of construction plans, the confidence of school officials in the eventuality of a renovated high school that includes

construction of a new academic wing, the intention of the current mayor to commit monies from a targeted revenue source, nor work on the facility to date provide the Commission or the students and educators at Beverly High School with a guarantee that the renovation/construction project will come to fruition, let alone come to fruition in a timely fashion, and that teaching and learning conditions at the high school are adequate and safe in the short term. The Commission called the attention of school officials to its correspondence dated September 28, 2004 which noted that an entire graduating class of students at Beverly High School will continue to be educated in a substandard facility at least through the 2008-2009 school year.

The Commission indicated that it had given the Beverly community both adequate time and notice that the problems with the high school facility are significant not only because of their implications for health and safety, but also for their negative impact on teaching and learning. The Commission reminded the Beverly community that it first placed the school on warning five years ago and, seeing no commitment to a firm and funded plan and timeline, then recommended probation over two years ago. Over a number of years school officials had repeatedly said that they intended to make a commitment to a firm and funded plan to fully resolve high school facility deficiencies. At various times money were appropriated for schematic designs and to hire architects for cost estimates. The condition of the facility has been studied and restudied. Despite the school's probationary status and the Commission's judgment that an anticipated timeline for construction/renovation to begin some time after 2007 was unacceptable, the Commission observed that the school community remains in the planning stages for such a project, with no approved funding for construction/renovation. In the meantime the Commission noted that as the school community has delayed committing required funds for identified problems, the facility continues to deteriorate, witness the recent alarming opening of a crack and subsequent settling of one of the horizontal concrete support beams holding up the roof of the school. The Commission further noted that the vast majority of the facilities problems that originally prompted warning and probation remain, specifically citing the following: significant water infiltration, building shifting, outdated and inefficient windows, rusting pipes, outdated science classrooms, cluttered classrooms, hanging and snaked and exposed wiring, failed electrical conduits and plumbing built into underground slabs, inadequate storage space, an inadequate intercom system, poor heat regulation, floor and ceiling tiles needing constant replacement, and building flooding. The Commission told school officials that membership in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges requires that schools demonstrate that they have made reasonable progress addressing identified concerns. In the case of Beverly High School, reasonable progress has not been demonstrated, hence the recommendation that the accreditation of the school be terminated.

As noted earlier, the Commission reviewed the school's show-cause response at its September 2005 meeting and affirmed its intention to recommend that the school be terminated from membership in the Association for failure to demonstrate reasonable progress resolving facilities deficiencies originally identified in the decennial evaluation report and through Commission visits to the school, a number of concerns of which the Commission has judged to have a negative impact on teaching and learning as well as health and safety implications. The Standards areas of concern include Curriculum, Instruction, and Community Resources for Learning.

The Commission acknowledged the following:

- the approval by the City Council in September 2005 of \$3.6 million of design and pre-construction funds
- the reiterated intention of the current mayor, the City Council, and school officials to resolve the high school's facilities needs through support of a \$60 million renovation/ construction project with full funding to be provided during the interest only phase through new growth revenues

- the strong support of the school as expressed in letters of support from the school committee, the City Council, the League of Women Voters, the Chamber of Commerce and State Representative Mary Grant
- improved electrical capacity in some rooms
- steps taken to increase access to technology
- the completion of structural repairs and water infiltration problems with structural columns in the summer and early fall of 2005
- the replacement and maintenance of ceiling and floor tiles
- the enclosure of many electrical, telephone, and cable wires
- the addition of a fourth computer lab
- the full operation of the fire alarm system
- the cleaning of catch basins
- the repair of all roof leaks
- the renovation of bathrooms once used for storage
- the painting of the ceiling and walls in the cafeteria
- the offering of courses through the VHS program
- the repair of science classroom sinks
- the repair of eye wash and exhaust capabilities in science classrooms
- the purchase of new chairs for the Upper Gym
- renovation of the Weight and Fitness room
- the replacement over the summer of 2005 of desks and tables that were bolted to the floors in science labs/science classrooms
- classrooms
- plans to renovate the culinary arts area, originally reported as scheduled for completion in the summer of 2005
- plans to replace rigging and stage curtains, originally reported as scheduled for completion in the summer of 2005

The Commission reminded city and school officials that in the decennial evaluation report the visiting committee to Beverly High School identified facilities concerns that were reiterated in subsequent correspondence and updated by visits to the school. In July 2002 a feasibility study commissioned by the town of Beverly (one that reiterated many of the needs previously identified in the February 1997 study by Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc. Architects) indicated that "major construction renovation will be necessary in order to bring Beverly High School into educational compliance with nationally accepted standards in order to serve the needs of its students." On May 9, 2003 the superintendent of schools informed the Commission that Beverly High School had chosen not to show cause why the recommendation for probation should not be forwarded to the Board of Trustees, ipso facto indicating the inability of school officials to submit new information contradicting the existence of the cited concerns. The Commission then noted that there has been no debate over the existence of longstanding and significant facilities deficiencies at Beverly High School or the fact that they have an impact on teaching and learning.

The Commission reminded school officials that it has never told a school community how to resolve its facilities problems, nor has it directed the town of Beverly how to resolve the facilities deficiencies of Beverly High School. It is a local decision whether to build a new school, to renovate the existing school, or to address facilities needs through a combination renovation/construction project.

The Commission told the school that it does require demonstration of steps taken to resolve identified problems in a reasonable period of time. This requirement has been shared through correspondence to school officials, most notably, in the notification letter dated April 3, 2003 which stated: "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." A year ago in

a letter dated September 28, 2004 the Commission alerted schools officials that progress to date was inadequate, stating "the proposed timeline for reconstruction and new construction [then projected for completion in 2008] ..is unacceptable..."

The Commission reminded the school of the following history: For five years the school and local officials have assured the Commission that concerns about the facility were in the process of being resolved through the appropriation of monies, including those to complete design plans. For example, in a letter dated January 22, 2003 then superintendent William Lupini reported that the Mayor had introduced an order to City Council for their consideration to "appropriate \$60 million for a new Beverly High School, subject to a successful debt exclusion." On March 14, 2003 Dr. Lupini later reported that the mayor had introduced an order to City Council which would "appropriate \$734,000 for schematic design on the new Beverly High School, subject to a successful debt exclusion and/or the School Committee assuming responsibility for the debt when payments begin. The School Committee has voted 6-1 in favor of this order and a public hearing on the measure will be held before City Council on Monday, March 17, 2003." This same correspondence then indicated that the Mayor had hired another architect to provide cost estimates for renovations to the current high school "as well as to provide current students with a quality facility in which to attend school until the new structure can be built." On March 27, 2003 Mayor Thomas Crean wrote "I can affirm for you that our city will be pursuing either the repair options presented in this report [from Fitzgerald Architects in Topsfield, MA dated March 17, 2003 projecting a cost of \$41,200,000 for reconstruction or remodeling or \$26,000,000 to rehab the existing high school including Patten] or the construction of a new high school wing as quickly as financing will allow." The schematic design plans did not come to fruition and money was never appropriated. In November 2003 it was also reported to the Commission that the mayor had set aside \$2.3 million to start high school repairs, yet such funds have not been put into facility improvements since 2003 given the fact that in 2003 the mayor reported that "the city has invested nearly \$2 million in repairs and upgrades in the building in the last few years" and in its most recent report the school confirmed that to date only \$2.6 million in total has been committed to building repairs.

The Commission reiterated that it has also been told repeatedly that the town should be trusted to resolve the high school's facilities problems based on the city's demonstrated history of support for school renovation citing the recent renovation of six elementary schools. Yet information from the school and city officials indicates that elementary school renovations were completed in 2003. The renovation of the high school has yet to begin.

The Commission noted that although school and town officials by all indicators have relatively recently come to agreement on the preferred resolution of high school facilities needs through a renovation/construction project expected to cost \$60 million and although the mayor asserts that funding will be available through the city by the fall of 2006, no funding has actually been appropriated beyond the \$3.6 million previously noted for design plans. The high school project remains in the earliest planning stages and the students at the school continue to be educated in a substandard, deteriorating, and outdated facility.

Further, the timeline for the approval of funding and construction continues to change and be pushed forward. Most recently, for example, in the school's Special Progress Report submitted in September of 2004 school officials indicated that the earliest date that Beverly High School students could benefit from an updated facility would be September 2008. Then, in the school's show-cause response dated August 24, 2005 school officials indicated "a second vote of the City Council will be taken in mid 2006 to approve full funding for the project." In an interview on September 20, 2005, however, the mayor indicated that such a vote would not likely take place until the early fall of 2006. The constant moving forward of the date for approval of funding is problematic because it means that, at the earliest, it will be the 2009-2010 school year at which time students will be in an appropriate facility, and there is no

guarantee that the project will actually come to fruition, potentially pushing the timeline forward even further.

The Commission acknowledge the assertion by the school and city officials that there are no outstanding health and safety concerns at Beverly High School. The Commission indicated that it disagrees. The inordinate number of egresses (85) from the building pose security and supervision challenges, the lack of handicapped accessibility puts individuals with disabilities at risk and at a disadvantage especially during an emergency, the original equipment public address system (identified in 1997 as needing replacement) that requires continued repair is undependable, use of extension cords poses a tripping hazard, electrical cords from the inordinate use of fans in hot weather pose a safety threat, the worn and slippery floor in the field house is unacceptable, and broken furniture is dangerous. The overall lack of cleanliness also poses a threat to student and faculty health.

The Commission cited numerous remaining and troubling facilities deficiencies that include outdated science laboratories in need of equipment upgrades particularly in light of the requirement that all students take three years of science in order to graduate, clouded plexiglass windows throughout much of the building, continued water infiltration around windows, tired and worn chalkboards, the overall worn appearance of numerous areas in the building including water stained perimeter shelving in classrooms, many with cracked linoleum tops and some with bent, rusted univent grates, the continued cracks in exterior walls that require monitoring, continued solar glare and inadequate ventilation in the library, worn and wrinkled carpeting in the library, the presence of rusted window blinds in classrooms, the presence of a significant amount of old, worn, mismatched classroom furniture, inadequate electrical capacity to expand the availability and use of technology in the classroom, outdated infrastructure systems that have generally outlived their useful life, significant accumulated clutter in numerous areas of the building, the lack of evidence that water flooding problems have been permanently resolved in the section of the facility that is below grade, and the overall tired visual appearance of the school.

The Commission has concluded that school and city officials have failed to act on the urgency to resolve facilities deficiencies at Beverly High School. Through their repeated delays in committing to and acting on a solution and through their decision to repair only those systems that fail and only improve space that is transferable to a renovated facility the school system and the town have subordinated the educational needs of high school students and neglected their needs. The result is a pervasive culture of low standards for the learning and work environment, low expectations, and tolerance of an outdated and severely worn physical plant with conditions that affect every occupant, adult and student, in the day to day working and learning in the building. Most troubling is that there is no assurance that students will be in an appropriate facility anytime in the near future. It is for these reasons that the Commission has voted that Beverly High School should not hold accredited status in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.