



GRANBY Jr./Sr. HIGH SCHOOL

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April 1, 2007

Ms. Pamela Gray-Bennett
Director, New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Commissioner on Public Secondary Schools
209 Burlington Road
Bedford, Massachusetts 01730-1433

Dear Ms. Gray-Bennett:

Having assumed the Principalship of Granby Junior-Senior High School on July 1, 2006, I am happy to submit our Special Progress Report which is the result of widespread and focused faculty attention and collaboration. I will specifically address the requested follow-up in order of presentation in your award letter of May 4, 2006.

1. Ensure that all faculty members across all content areas incorporate school-wide rubrics into their assessment strategies.

Classification: *In Progress*

Like many of our colleagues across New England, this recommendation remains both challenging and elusive to embrace and implement. The mission of the NEASC Rubric Standardization and Implementation Committee of Granby Jr./Sr. High School remains to create school-wide rubrics that are easy for teachers and students to understand, somewhat adaptable, and above all, relevant to all classes and useful for grading. After developing them, teachers were encouraged to take them for a "test run." Based on our school-wide learning expectations, six school-wide rubrics, measuring reading, public speaking, writing, research skills, listening, and problem solving need to be made operational. In responding to this challenge, the first committee meeting was held on October 17, 2006. This committee is comprised of teachers at the junior- and senior-high levels, representing the departments of English, world language, history, math, physical education, and science.

Some history: the original school-wide rubrics had been created at a series of faculty meetings in the years before the NEASC committee visitation. Although each department had claimed ownership of several rubrics that best pertained to each subject area, it was clear within the building, from our self-study and to the NEASC visiting committee that the original rubrics

were not meeting the needs of all departments at all grade levels and, thus, were not being implemented. Traditionally, the school-wide rubrics were generally perceived by the staff as being unhelpful, irrelevant to classes, and an implementation that served only to meet NEASC mandates.

The committee sent a questionnaire to all faculty to determine which (if any) of the original school-wide rubrics were being used, how often they were used, and whether adaptations had been made to the rubrics. In addition, the questionnaire solicited ideas for rubric revision. Thirty eight out of forty two faculty responded (90%.) Six (14%) responded that they do not use rubrics – the other 86 % of faculty indicated they do use them. Nearly all respondents gave helpful information regarding the original rubrics.

From November 2006 through January 2007, our new rubric committee carefully and thoroughly revised rubrics according to faculty suggestions and our departmental needs. We simplified them and made them more adaptable. They were uploaded to the faculty's cyber drop box for teacher use by February 2007. The expectation was for faculty members to implement two rubrics during the month of February. Faculty members were asked to provide the committee with feedback by the end of February.

Twenty three of the forty two faculty members (55%) responded. Suggestions were made and feedback was given. Staff used the adaptable aspects of the rubrics (e.g. added course-specific criterion, individualized the grading scale.) Some feedback commended the rubrics for being "just right." The Special Education department created its own rubric, for the directed study block, since none of the six rubrics seemed to apply. Ironically, the writing rubric was not helpful to the English department because it was viewed as too general. It is, however, appropriate for classes that do not routinely evaluate writing. Some of the simplified rubrics were considered by the seventh grade teachers to be too detailed for seventh graders. One math teacher noted that the problem-solving rubric was not helpful – and it was expected that this rubric would be most helpful to the math and science departments. There were several respondents who wondered why teachers are expected to use a different rubric from the MCAS rubric, which is the measure by which students are evaluated at the state level.

Through written feedback and informal conversations, committee members learned that most respondents used the NEASC school-wide rubrics because it was a mandate, not because they were useful diagnostic tools. The rubrics are seen by staff, generally, as superfluous and not necessarily relevant or helpful. Indications are that most faculty use their own, personalized rubrics and grading task lists for each assignment they create, and they prefer these assignment-specific rubrics to the generalized school-wide rubrics.

The school-wide rubrics have been created, and seem, through feedback, to be as good as they can be. Except for minor revisions, this task is complete. Implementation of school-wide rubrics, however, is still in progress. The issue for staff seems to be not so much with the rubric design, as with the "one-size-fits-all" NEASC philosophy of school-wide rubrics. This committee has heard, loud and clear, that one size does not fit all. There is a simmering hostility toward the mandate that these rubrics must be implemented because the NEASC organization requires it. We continue to work to convince the faculty that these rubrics are actually helpful, which is what

needs to be done in order for faculty to willingly implement them. This remains an on-going challenge and whatever support and encouragement from NEASC in identifying best practices will be greatly appreciated as we move forward with this recommendation.

2. Develop performance indicators to assess achievement of the school's civic and social expectations as articulated in the mission.

Classification: *Completed w/exception of pending faculty approval for new wording of Civic Expectation 1. NEASC will be updated on the faculty action when finalized.*

The Civic and Social Expectations Committee worked hard to develop quantifiable performance indicators that correlate to the following expectations:

Civic

Students will be able to:

- **Demonstrate an *understanding of respect for diversity.*** (New phrasing.)
(Original phrasing: Demonstrate respect for diversity.)
 - *Successfully meet the requirements of courses that highlight diversity issues including, but not limited to, requirements in Social Studies, English Literature, Wellness and the Leadership elective.*
 - *Recommendation—students should be required to take a class that will count as a “diversity course” in a similar manner to the “writing” requirement.*
- **Identify the responsibilities and importance of participating as citizens in school and global society.**
 - *Successfully meet the requirements of courses that highlight citizenship and model behaviors including, but not limited to Government and Leadership.*
- **Show awareness of local, national, and global events.**
 - *Successfully meet the requirements of courses that highlight world issues past and present including, but not limited to, Government, Economics, Current Affairs and Leadership.*

Social

Students will be able to:

- **Demonstrate responsible,**
 - *Bring material/completed assignments to class.*
 - *Follow school/class rules.*
- **cooperative**
 - *Follow adult directions.*
 - *Contribute positively to class environment.*
- **courteous behavior.**
 - *Listen actively to others.*
 - *Respond verbally and non-verbally in a respectful manner.*
- **Show respect and responsibility for all property.**

- *Follow the standards of acceptable behavior regarding personal and public property as outlined in the student handbook.*
- **Create an environment where concern and empathy for others is encouraged.**
 - *Adopt behavior modeled by professional teachers and all staff members.*
 - *Follow rules regarding student interaction as outlined in student handbook.*
 - *Initiate and participate in student-driven initiatives designed to educate peers about social issues.*

3. Immediately take steps to significantly increase access to technology for both students and staff use.

Classification: *In Progress*

A considerable amount of work has occurred to address access to technology. This past summer, the town appropriated approximately \$78,000 for improvements in school technology, the majority of which was expended at the Granby Jr./Sr. High School.

The capital article funded a total refurbishing of one of the high school's computer labs (room 109) with new computers and monitors to replace the outdated computers that had minimal functionality. The new computers consist of a Pentium IV processor, high speed network connectivity, a 17 inch LCD flat screen monitor and the newest version of Microsoft Office Professional and Macromedia Studio 8. As a result, this classroom is now capable of "running" the latest computer applications and can be used for almost any type of computer instruction.

The capital article also funded a major improvement in the Graphics Department. Until recently, the Graphics Department was adjacent to another computer lab and shared resources such as computers and a network printer with that lab. This sometimes resulted in a shortage of computers or a backlog on the printer when two classes were utilizing these spaces. This past summer, the number of computers was increased in both the Graphics classroom as well as the adjacent lab. In addition, a new high speed printer was purchased for the graphics classroom making the existing high speed printer available for the other lab. Now that both the Graphics classroom and the adjacent lab have more resources, those classrooms can now fully accommodate the classes assigned to those areas.

Local money was used to purchase four additional computers to a recently updated lab (room 110) so that the room can accommodate even the larger high school classes. The computers purchased for this classroom are similar to those purchased for room 109.

The capital article also funded the purchase of several classroom computers. Up until the end of school year 2005 -2006, a significant number of classrooms had an outdated computer utilizing Windows 98. Although these computers were functional, they were slow and not capable of "running" all the current software. With capital funding, five of the outdated computers were replaced with new ones similar to the computers purchased for the lab in room 109.

In addition, the Granby Public Schools has been very fortunate to receive high quality donated computers from the United States Air Force. The majority of these computers are Pentium IV's and have been placed at the Granby Jr./Sr. High School. This past summer, any outdated classroom

computer that was not replaced with capital money received a refurbished Pentium IV computer donated by the military. As a result, fourteen classrooms received one of the updated computers. Thus, there are no more outdated “Windows 98” computers in the Granby Jr./Sr. High School.

Three refurbished computers were placed in the teachers’ room updating the technology in that location. Since many teachers use these computers during their preparation periods, the updated computers have been helpful and are utilized all day.

As part of the capital article, each teacher was provided a 512MB USB flash drive at the beginning of the school year. This has increased the teacher’s access to technology because it allows teachers to access their computer files from remote locations such as home, another school, or at a college or university.

By utilizing both local funds and the capital article, two additional Infocus projectors were purchased this past summer adding to those purchased in the summer of 2005. These devices are in high demand by teachers because they allow for a true technological integration into each class, regardless of subject matter. Thus, students and teachers access technology more frequently when these devices are readily available for classroom use.

As a result of the technological improvements, the Granby Jr./Sr. High School has a student to computer ratio of 3.5:1, surpassing the state standard of 5:1. Thus, our students and faculty now have more access to technology than the recommended benchmark established by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Since technology can only be accessed and utilized to its potential with adequate training, the Granby Jr./Sr. High School has offered technology related professional development opportunities to its faculty for the last few years. It is obvious that these courses have been effective based on the growth in the faculty’s technological skill levels. For the last two years, the teachers have been administered a technology survey designed by the Massachusetts Department of Education known as the Technology Self-Assessment Tool (TSAT) which categorizes a teacher based on their technological strengths. In school year 2004 – 2005, about 55% of the faculty scored in the “Early Technology” category with 45% scoring in a more advanced category. In 2005 – 2006, 34% of the teachers scored in the “Early Technology” category with 66% scoring in a more advanced category. Thus, more teachers are being promoted to the advanced categories demonstrating growth and use of technology.

4. Increase access to technology, including adequate number of computer stations in the library.

Classification: *In Progress*

The need for additional computers in the library has been discussed at the technology committee meetings and the committee is in agreement that this should occur as soon as possible. However, adding traditional desktop computers to the library will consume a considerable amount of space, leaving little space for other uses and materials. Therefore, we agreed to install a wireless access point in the library so that laptop computers can be utilized. When not in use, laptops can be stored in a secure area instead of consuming library space. Thus, there will be more computers available to accommodate the larger classes, but the space will also be available for groups or library functions requiring more space for non-technological activities.

The wireless access point was funded by a town appropriated capital article for school technology and the laptops were donated by the military. Originally, there will be at least four laptops available in the library, but that number is expected to increase as the school receives additional military donations or funds the purchase of new laptops. Completion of this project is expected in the late fall of 2006.

In addition, the library recently received a new high speed laser printer. This in itself helps promote access to technology in the library since teachers and students are not waiting for print jobs to print while still logged onto a computer. Instead, print jobs are printed immediately and because users finish sooner, the computer is now available for someone else.

Also, the librarian's office was equipped with a Pentium IV computer that "runs" the same software as the other computers in the library. As a result, she no longer needs to occupy a student computer in the library to perform her duties.

5. Increase and update print and non-print resources to meet the needs of the Junior/Senior High School.

Classification: *In Progress.*

The Granby Jr/Sr High School Media Center has made great strides in expanding the quantity and quality of its print and non-print resources. While the following resources have been recently added, it should be noted that expanding the media center's resource base is an ongoing process that will be perpetually "in progress."

For the period June 2005, through February 2007, the following purchases and upgrades have been made at the Granby Jr./Sr. High School Library / Media Center:

Nonfiction print materials to support curriculum:

353 volumes including:

- American Culture Set (5 volume set)
- Environmental Ethics Video and Curriculum Set
- Periodic Table of Elements (10 vols.)
- Physics (5 vols.)
- Biographies (28 vols.)
- Modern Nations of the World / Nations in Transition (15 vols.)
- Elizabethan England / Shakespeare / Renaissance (8 vols.)

Fiction Materials to support literacy:

- General Fiction: 726 volumes
- Graphic (Sequential Art) Novels: 62 volumes

Databases:

- Thompson Gale Databases
- Literature Resource Center (biographical information, literary criticism, reviews of books articles and dissertations)
- Biography Resource Center and Marquis Who's Who
- Student Resource Center Gold. Student Resource Center covers all core curricula areas, including history, literature, science, social studies, and a premium selection of reference material, full-text periodicals and newspapers, primary sources, creative works, and multimedia, including hours of video and audio clips and podcasts.

6. Report the school's plan and timeline to renovate and add to the Jr./Sr. High School and improve grounds as called for in the feasibility study on space utilization, ensuring that such a plan addresses short-comings related to inadequate library space, unsafe and inadequate athletic fields, inappropriate space for junior high special education, flooding in the parking lot, inadequate technology, an inadequate telephone system, and an inadequate heating system.

Classification: planned for future

I am happy to report that both the Granby School Committee and the Board of Selectmen in conjunction with the School Building Committee had approved and submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority a Statement of Interest describing and detailing existing deficiencies and requested priorities categories as appropriate:

Priority 1: Replacement or renovation of a building which is structurally unsound or otherwise in a condition seriously jeopardizing the health & safety of school children, where no alternative exists.

Priority 5: Replacement, renovation or modernization of the heating system in a schoolhouse to increase energy conservation and decrease related energy costs in the schoolhouse.

Priority 7: Replacement or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.

It is our District's focus-expectation that the Massachusetts School Building Authority will act favorably as this Statement of Interest on July 2007 placing into motion a timetable that envisions the issues being addressed in a realistic fashion. In fulfillment of this expectation, the Granby District in conjunction with the Massachusetts School Building Administration will be scheduled within the next six weeks to host a professional facility assessment. By late Fall, 2007, MSBA will determine this status of the Granby application. Following MSBA approval, a special town meeting will convene within 120 days to determine the status of the proposed

building project. All aspects of the Granby proposal addresses all of the points raised of the NEASC letter of May 4, 2006.

We are hopeful that this communication fulfills the expectations of the Special Progress Report. We await your input and assistance.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Lynch
Principal

John Berneche
Co-Chair
Follow-up Committee

Jessica Funk
Co-Chair
Follow-Up Committee