

# **Two-Year Progress Report of Granby Junior-Senior High School October 1, 2007**

## **Section I – Detailed Responses to Highlighted Recommendations**

**1. Develop curriculum documents using a standard template that prescribe content, integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations, suggest instructional strategies, and suggest assessment techniques that include the use of school-wide rubrics.**

### **Classification: Completed**

Response: The use of a standardized template to record all course curriculum articulation plans was mandated by the central office administration in 2006 and subsequently developed by the faculty. The template outlines content goals, integrates that with district learning goals and the state curricula frameworks, and embraces instructional strategies, assessments and rubrics. The template embraces all disciplines, grades 7 - 12. The Administration has mandated that all course offerings will be formatted and recorded on this standardized template by December 21, 2007.

**2. Develop a formal professional development program to ensure that faculty have training in the best practices regarding curriculum development and have use of a wide variety of instructional and assessment strategies.**

### **Classification: In Progress**

Response: The formation of the Professional Development Committee in early spring, 2007 was the beginning of the process of working on a formal professional development plan for Granby Junior Senior High School (GJSHS). Prior to this, the professional development was identified on an as needed basis through the building principal with some input from individual faculty members and team leaders. It should be noted that professional development funds for the Granby district are extremely limited for the 2007-2008 school year. Therefore, the immediate focus of the professional development committee is to create a program with the resources at hand, relying on the in-house expertise of our own personnel, and then to later build upon that foundation when funding levels allow a broader focus. We chose as our model the professional development program used by Marblehead (Massachusetts) High School, which emphasizes the use of “in-house” professional development to meet the needs of the faculty and staff.

Based on a survey sent out in April of 2007, the committee identified workshops the faculty members are willing to facilitate. The committee found a great number of members of the school community who are qualified to educate their peers in curriculum development and instructional strategies. The following subjects are among those which

faculty members have offered to lead workshops: implementing the Socratic seminar, standards-based instruction; MELA-O training; using learning games as an assessment tool; using various technologies for classroom instruction (PowerPoint, Excel, Photoshop, and developing class web sites); incorporating cooperative learning activities; establishing a school-wide writing process using standard MLA requirements. It is widely understood that our school-wide professional development will be greatly improved by engaging the faculty knowledge base. These are areas, after all, that have been identified as professional development needs by our faculty and staff. In using these in-house talents, we feel that we can better serve the individual needs of our faculty.

There are additional needs that cannot be satisfied in-house. These may be addressed through the future funding of workshops presented by recognized pedagogical experts, brought to Granby to inform on a specific need recognized by the faculty as being a professional development priority. In the past, this point has been addressed by encouraging faculty participation in workshops such as those provided through the Research for Better Teaching program. This committee also recommended that GJSHS explore the feasibility of forming “professional partnerships” with other school districts in the local geographic area, which will allow increased resource-sharing and staff-driven professional development workshops.

It is important to note that GJSHS faculty and administrators are in broad agreement on the need for a professional development program that “ensures that faculty have training in the best practices regarding curriculum development and have use of a wide variety of instructional and assessment strategies.” In this regard, administration supports the following points, as noted in the Superintendent’s survey response:

- teams of teachers will be given release time to take the Curriculum Articulation Plans and examine them for vertical alignment
- the formation of discipline-specific study groups to determine, on a continuous basis, the professional development strengths and weaknesses of the various departments
- the return of John Collins to review the use of his writing system
- continued rubric development and implementation
- the formation of Learning Communities to analyze assessment data

Administration also supports training in the area of curriculum development by its arrangement for the use of team meeting time in the middle school for cross-curricular planning and the discussion of a variety of strategies used in the classroom. School-wide, during the “Hours of Power,” and weekly departmental meetings, team work includes sharing varied strategies for instruction and assessment.

**3. Develop and implement a formal process to assess every student's achievement of the academic expectations in the mission, using the school-wide rubrics.**

**Classification: In Progress**

Response: Six school-wide rubrics have been developed as a means of assessing student achievement of the academic expectations in the GJSHS mission statement.

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 perceived "one-size-fits-all" NEASC philosophy on school-wide rubrics. 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. We appreciate NEASC's presence with our faculty on October 15, 2007 focusing specifically on this topic.

**4. Develop a formal method, including a provision of adequate time, for teachers to examine student work and use the results to improve instructional strategies.**

**Classification: Completed**

Response: A newly-launched peer collaborative program was developed and implemented for the 2006-2007 school year to create a formal method within a structured format in which student work and instructional strategies become the focus of discussion. This program envisions that all teachers sharing the same prep period meet once a month at a pre-determined time/place for 45 minutes of professional collaboration. Since its inception, this program has infused our staff with a renewed focus on the critical need for teachers to communicate with one another on the key issues of lesson development, instructional strategies, and the sharing and careful examination of student work as it relates to depth and breadth of curriculum coverage.

In addition to this initiative, the administration has also directed team leaders to use a portion of each department meeting to examine student work and use the results to improve instructional strategies. Each academic department has moved forward in developing standards by which lessons, assignments, and assessments are reviewed to ensure that depth of understanding and the use of higher-level thinking skills become the primary objective. The careful examination of student work has become a critical component in this process.

**5. Review and revise the supervision and evaluation process to ensure it provides sufficient and timely feedback to teachers for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs.**

**Classification: Completed**

Response: The administration has diligently pursued full implementation of an evaluation process which highlights repeated pre- and post-observation conferences, at least one informal and one formal observation of every teacher by either the principal or vice-principal, resulting in honest and positive professional feedback in support of student learning. This evaluation process serves student needs for success and learning and is consistently pursued by the administration.

Supervision has also been enhanced by the determination of school administrators to be a positive, supportive, and visible presence throughout the building. This has sent a powerful message to students and teachers that they are the number one priority within this learning community, and has provided the professional community with a powerful leadership model upon which they can rely.

**6. Develop a professional development program that supports identified school needs and district improvement plans.**

**Classification: In Progress**

Response: As a result of the NEASC notification letter, a committee was formed in early spring 2007 to identify school needs in terms of a professional development program that would address the district improvement plan as well. This committee decided more data was needed and created a separate faculty/administration survey that was distributed to all school members, collected, and collated at the end of the school year.

An analysis of data collected through the survey identified the following school/faculty needs:

- school wide writing program (including plagiarism concerns, MLA documentation, copyright issues)
- curriculum development (including multi-cultural, layered, and interdisciplinary curriculum and increasing use of technology)
- instruction (including standards based and differentiated instruction)
- assessment (the use of rubrics, grading interdepartmental work, authentic assessment)
- student / faculty dynamics (including mentoring program, identifying and connecting with motivationally challenged students, and social-emotional needs of adolescents)

Additionally, through the analysis of the current district improvement plan and survey feedback from administration, the following needs were identified:

- curriculum development (including math curriculum methodology, curriculum development that utilizes higher order thinking skills, curriculum that includes teaching and testing outside textbook)
- use of data-driven decision making
- technology (including use of technology to enhance instruction, streamline record keeping)
- update staff training (including ELL training, autism and ADHD training, staff mentoring training, and training in differentiated learning)
- assessment (including rubric development, formative assessment, and authentic assessment)

Based upon these findings this committee moved forward to tie the needs listed above with the efforts of in-house and out-sourced professional development seminars (some of which are described above in highlighted recommendation # 2). While this recommendation has received an “in progress” classification we feel that we have taken a giant step forward in addressing professional development needs of the staff, and the means to fulfill these needs.

**7. Adopt a formal, ongoing program to ensure that each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student’s educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.**

**Classification: In Progress**

Response: In the spring of 2007, a team of ten volunteers comprising teachers, counselors, and administrators met to discuss the development of a mentoring/advisory program. After a preliminary investigation of best practices literature and programs at local schools, the team concluded that further study of models, expected outcomes, and measurement criteria is required. The committee’s task is somewhat complicated by the fact that the school is considering a change in our current block schedule. The committee is, however, committed to providing a recommendation to the faculty and administration by spring 2008.

The committee is proud to report the following accomplishments to date:

- accepted the NEASC recommendation to investigate the development of a mentoring/advisory program at GJSHS
- completed and initial review of mentoring/advisory literature and programs at other schools
- organized a visit by Chicopee High School staff to discuss their successful advisory program, including implementation timeline, issues, and best practices

- implemented a student mentoring program that pairs freshmen with juniors
- examined results from staff survey regarding the accommodation of an advisory program within our schedule

Based on these accomplishments the committee plans on instituting the following action plan:

- communicate general goals of mentoring/advisory programs to faculty and students
- survey staff and students to determine needs and interests at different grade levels
- continue review of mentoring/advisory literature and programs at other schools
- determine the best model to fit the needs of the GJSHS school community
- investigate local resources that can assist with program development
- evaluate current schedule and proposed schedules as they affect the implementation of a mentoring/advisory program
- recommend to faculty and administration a proposed course of action in the spring of 2008.

**8. Develop and implement a plan for the regular evaluation of the guidance, health services and library-media programs.**

**Classification: Completed**

Response: As of spring 2007, the guidance department, health services, and library-media programs are evaluated on a yearly basis with programmatic and personnel indicators specific to the work and services of these three vital school programs. Measurements of success and of continuous improvement are at the core of this evaluation. In addition, it should be noted that our health services program is subject to outside evaluation. In June 2007, our health services department was favorably reviewed by Granby parents participating in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's evaluation of GJSHS.

**9. Report any additional steps taken as the school awaits communication from MSBA regarding the Statement of Interest filed in 2007 to address shortcomings related to inadequate library space, unsafe and inadequate athletic fields, inappropriate space for Jr./Sr. school special education, flooding in the parking lot, inadequate technology, an inadequate telephone system and an inadequate heating system (added per request of NEASC letter of July 30, 2007).**

**Classification: Planned for Future**

Response: On August 27, 2007 consultants for the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) conducted an extensive tour of our facility. Our superintendent, who was accompanied by the building principal, director of maintenance, and a town select-board member who also serves on the school building committee, led the tour. The tour was thorough and documented the building's safety issues and infrastructure deficiencies,

particularly the need to rectify heating, ventilation, and communication shortcomings, as well as the need to replace ill- equipped science laboratories and other deficient learning areas. We anxiously await the report generated by that visit as we anticipate the next steps for both Granby and the Commonwealth.