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

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CORRECTED LETTER

February 7, 2006

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John Lent
Principal
Maynard High School
1 Tiger Drive
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Dear Mr. Lent:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its January 8-9, 2006 meeting, reviewed the Combined Special Progress Report and Report of a Commission Directed Visit of Maynard High School and voted to place the school on probation because of significant deficiencies in its adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation on Curriculum, School Resources for Learning, and Community Resources for Learning.

School officials have the opportunity to show cause why the school should not be placed on probation. If Maynard High School elects to show cause, it should file a written submission of its case by March 1, 2006 providing information, beyond that contained in the school's Special Progress Report, which demonstrates that the problems cited either do not exist or have been resolved. Review of such a response would take place at the next Commission meeting on March 26-27, 2006. If the school chooses not to show cause, it should so inform the Commission in writing by March 1, 2006. Failure to show cause is an indication to the Commission that in the view of the school the concerns cited are accurate. Correspondence from the school should be sent to the Commission office by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Because a request for a show-cause response is a serious matter, the Commission has asked that I review the communications between the school and the Commission since the last evaluation visit in April 2002. Since the school's decennial evaluation in April 2002 the Commission has reviewed three progress reports from the school, specifically a routine Two-Year Progress Report and two Special Progress Reports, one of which was combined with a Directed Visit by a commission member and a staff member. A summary of each report follows.

When the Commission reviewed Maynard High School's decennial evaluation report at its meeting of March 2002 and continued the school's accreditation, the school was commended for the reflective and inclusive process with which the school developed its mission statement and its expectations for student learning, the collegiality and informal collaboration among the faculty, the positive school climate, and the faculty and staff's commitment to student well-being. However, the school was placed on warning for

the Standards of Accreditation on Mission and Expectations for Student Learning, Curriculum, and Community Resources for Learning. The Commission expressed concern over the lack of definition regarding the meaning of school-wide learning goals, the lack of emphasis placed on the achievement of school-wide expectations for student learning, inadequate library space, an inadequate print collection, inadequate storage space for AV materials, outdated science equipment and the outdated design of the science rooms, limited guidance space, inadequate and outdated technology, and inadequate funding for long-range plans for building and site management. The Commission asked the school to report in a Special Progress Report the following: develop and implement a plan to fund and address all facilities deficiencies, in particular ensuring the resolution of problems with library, science, guidance, and music space, storage space, and inadequate technology; budget for necessary resources for the library media center to include updating the technology, hardware, and software in the library media center; and provide funding to replace outdated textbooks and provide appropriate science equipment, among other items.

The Commission reviewed the school's Special Progress Report in September 2003. It commended the school for the considerable work done to create and define measurable school-wide academic expectations for all students, the upgrading of safety and security protocols at school entrances, the additional attention given in the budget to the need to replace inadequate equipment and instructional materials, and the replacement of outdated chemistry textbooks, among others. In addition the Commission asked the school to report on the following: continue to monitor and assess the impact of the \$400 activity fee on student participation, clarify the school's process for assessing the achievement by each student in the school of each of the academic expectations in the mission, using school-wide rubrics; report the completion of curriculum maps; submit the findings of the School Facilities Committee related to Maynard High School along with a timeline and explanation of funding for the resolution of all school facilities deficiencies; increase student access to technology throughout the building; fully integrate the library media program into the curriculum; confirm that a full-time certified library media specialist has been hired to serve the students of the school; and provide an update on and assess the adequacy of financial support to address the current programs, staffing, and technology needs..

At its January 2005 meeting the Commission reviewed the Two-Year Progress Report and commended the work of the School Facilities Standing Committee to gain approval of funds to upgrade the science labs, the development of a five-year capital plan to guide funding for the facility's needs, the effective reorganization and improved use of the library, existing storage spaces and parking areas, the upgrading of library resources and services and enhancement of communication and climate to meet student and faculty needs, the increased professional development for integration of technology into the curriculum and the improvement in library resources and opportunities for student research-based learning. In addition, the Commission removed the Standard on Mission and Expectations for Student Learning from the school's warning status. However, the Commission asked the school to submit the report of the findings of the School Facilities Committee, to provide a plan and a timeline to address all facility deficiencies identified in the Five-Year Capital Plan as well as those identified by the School Facilities Committee, to confirm that the school will have a certified or provisionally certified library media specialist for the 2005-2006 school year, and to confirm the school has a full-time nurse.

The Commission reviewed the school's Special Progress Report at its September 2005 meeting and voted to defer action pending a visit by a Commission member and a Commission staff person. At that time the Commission expressed concern regarding the deficiencies in the facility, including health and safety concerns and the ability of the facility to support and enhance the delivery of the curriculum. In addition, the Commission was concerned about the provision for the renovation and repair of the facility should the community decide not to fund major projects. Finally, the Commission remained concerned that the school did not have a certified library/media specialist.

As a result of the Commission Directed visit the Commission acknowledged some limited progress including a curriculum line item in the district budget in the amount of \$260,000 of which the high school was the main recipient for the replacement of textbooks over a three-year period; a district technology plan, funded through the curriculum line item, a technology department budget, and grant monies; the addition of nine computers to the library (instead of one at the time of the accreditation visit) and a variety of on-line reference tools; biology labs with new lab tables and sinks with running water; and the expenditure of \$10,000-15,000 on the repair of the roof over the last several years (eliminating leaks).

However, the Commission expressed continued concern that there has been no resolution to a myriad of facilities problems such as the following:

- missing hardware on many windows, leaving just one to pull open the window
- faulty locks on many classrooms, making it difficult to access classrooms and storage
- rows of desks original to the building stacked in hallways and waiting to be refurbished
- a paucity of current or new science equipment
- the outdated design of the science rooms
- the absence of computers for student use in many classrooms, including science and mathematics rooms
- cluttered classrooms with books and materials stacked on windowsills and unit ventilators
- a lack of storage throughout the school, including the AV storage area
- a chemistry lab in which only half the sinks and gas jets are operable, impacting the teacher's ability to provide adequate opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills and to provide depth of understanding in the curriculum
- the original boiler, still working, but identified by the principal and business manager as the number one priority for funding
- outdated wiring, with clocks missing in some rooms and an open hole exposed
- an intercom system which does not work in the music room or cafeteria and is in need of repair or replacement
- faded exterior paint
- cracks in door frames and window frames
- the bell system in need of repair and/or replacement
- dirty, outdated and cluttered locker rooms

In addition to the facilities issues noted above, the Commission's concerns regarding the Library/Media Center have prompted it to add the Standard for School Resources for Learning to the probationary status of the school due to the following:

- a limited library print collection
- the lack of a full-time certified library/media specialist
- an undersized library, slightly less than the size of a double classroom, unable to support a rigorous curriculum and meaningful research

The Commission wishes to remind the Maynard community that the Commission has been monitoring Maynard High School's progress resolving its facilities needs since April 2002. During that time period the school has reported efforts to explore and fund various plans, and it has taken some steps to address some facilities issues. Beyond continued use of the existing budget to whittle away at small projects maintaining current conditions, and beyond a five-year plan to continue to address technology and textbook needs through the relatively healthy curriculum line item, there is no guarantee of any town monies to make additional progress on facilities deficiencies for the upcoming year, let alone to fully resolve them through a comprehensive plan that is approved and funded with a firm timeline for

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completion. Even more importantly, there appears to be little will on the part of the town to address and resolve the problems of the facility which is tired, outdated, and in need of major renovations and upgrades in order to meet the academic needs of students in the 21st century. As a result the long unaddressed physical deficiencies will continue to impair teaching and learning at Maynard High School for the foreseeable future. These concerns prompt the Commission's recommendations for probation.

The Commission wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the superintendent and School Committee in trying to resolve the facilities needs of the high school. However, continued membership in the Association carries with it a responsibility to address fully all identified needs in a timely manner. Such progress has not been demonstrated by the Maynard community.

The Commission wishes to be clear that it will not dictate to the community a particular resolution to Maynard High School's facilities problems. That is the responsibility of the leadership of the school system and the community. Once the school is placed on probation it will remain in that status until it can demonstrate that the facility deficiencies have been fully resolved. In order for probation not to deteriorate to a recommendation for termination the school community will have to demonstrate reasonable progress resolving facilities needs through regular reports to the Commission.

We have enclosed copies of the Association's Policy and Procedure for Appeal of Adverse Action and Policy on Release of Information for your review as well as an explanation of the Commission's show-cause procedures. Should you have any questions about the Commission action or information that has been requested, please contact the Commission office.

Sincerely,



Pamela Gray-Bennett

PGB/rt
Enclosures

cc: Mark Masterson, Superintendent, Maynard Public Schools
Anne Pratt, Chair, Maynard School Committee
Martin Gray, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools