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

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April 14, 2009

Kenneth Healey
Principal
Lisbon High School
2 Sugg Drive
Lisbon Falls, ME 04252

Dear Mr. Healey:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its March 29-30, 2009 meeting, reviewed information from a Report of a Visit Requested by the School and voted to take the adverse action of placing the school on probation because of significant deficiencies in the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation on Instruction, School Resources for Learning, and Community Resources for Learning.

Consistent with Association policy, before the Commission affirms this adverse action, school officials have the opportunity to show cause why the school should not be placed on probation. If Lisbon High School elects to show cause, it should file a written submission of its case by May 15, 2009 providing information which demonstrates that the concerns cited either do not exist or have been resolved. If the school chooses to waive its right to show cause, it must so inform the Commission in writing by May 15, 2009. The absence of an argument showing cause is an indication to the Commission that the concerns cited are viewed by school officials to be accurate. Review of the school's written response to show cause or not to show cause will take place at the next Commission meeting on June 23-24, 2009. Correspondence from the school should be sent to the Commission office by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Since a request for a show-cause response is a serious matter, the Commission has asked that I briefly review the communications between the school and the Commission since the last evaluation visit in May 2005 related to the concerns that have prompted this adverse action of probationary status for the school. The Commission's monitoring of other concerns not related to this action and progress made in addressing these concerns can be found in correspondence from the Commission.

Since the review of the school's decennial evaluation report in May 2005, the Commission has reviewed three (3) Special Progress Reports in October 2006, January 2006, and March 2009 as well as the required Two-Year Progress Report in January 2008.

The visiting team identified a number of issues in its May 2005 decennial visit to the school which prompted the Commission to place the school on warning for the Standards on School Resources for Learning and Community Resources for Learning; they included: limited access to computers and outdated technology in the library; the closure of the library at lunch, and both before and after school; the lack of time to coordinate library resources with school curriculum; the lack of time available for the librarian to collaborate with teachers around the curriculum; closure of the library for use to support study halls, blood drives, etc., further limiting access to the library; lack of adequate support staff to assist guidance counselors; inadequate communication between support service staff and administration; the lack of a comprehensive preventative maintenance plan to address facilities deficiencies; health and safety issues in the woodshop area, including a small industrial arts area with little room for students to move freely without concern for moving machine parts and with several pieces of equipment without proper guards; inadequate custodial staffing to ensure cleanliness in the building; lack of a plan to maintain and upgrade technology; inadequate size of the school cafeteria, resulting in three lunches and a negative impact on student scheduling; severely limited storage areas, impacting the size of learning areas; air quality issues in the boy's locker room; gym bleachers without side rails and in violation of safety codes; student restrooms which do not have handicapped accessibility hardware including rails, sinks, and faucets; an antiquated heating system which results in excessive heat and cold temperatures; and insufficient computers to permit adequate access to technology to support teaching and learning.

The Commission reviewed the school's first Special Progress Report in September 2006 and commended the school for the addition of a technician to ensure the library/media center is open both before and after school, the provision of funds to increase custodial support, the plans to resubmit a proposal to the State for the next round of state-funded capital improvements, the steps taken to improve the HVAC system, the steps taken to ensure shop equipment is safe, and the installation of rails, sinks, and faucet handles to ensure handicapped accessibility in student restrooms. The Commission asked school officials to report progress on the plan and timeline to fully resolve all facilities concerns identified in the evaluation report, including the inadequacies related to heating and air quality, inadequate access to technology, inadequate storage space, unsafe gym bleachers, and the small size of the cafeteria. As well, the Commission asked the school to assess the adequacy of the budget for the 2007-2008 school year to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, staffing, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials and supplies.

When the Commission reviewed the school's Two-Year Progress report at its January 2008 meeting, commended the school district's aggressive pursuit of funding for a new or renovated high school, the school's plan to submit a capital improvement application in the next round of funding, and the addition of new computers on carts and the repair of the gym bleachers. The Commission requested another Special Progress Report for November 2008 in which it asked the school to submit an update on any increases in enrollment and to describe the additional short-term steps taken to address the facilities deficiencies identified in the evaluation report, including progress on plans and a timeline to fully resolve all facilities concerns, and to confirm the replacement of furniture for one classroom as well as any other improvements.

At the request of the principal, I visited the school in March 2009 and conferred with the principal and assistant principal, toured the facility for the purpose of determining facilities deficiencies, discussed with school officials the information that had been requested regarding health and safety concerns and the impact of the facility on teaching and learning, and met with the school board to discuss the school's accreditation status. As stated earlier, at its March 2009 meeting the Commission reviewed the

information gathered during the Visit Requested by the School. As a result of that review, the Commission identified the following concerns:

Instruction:

- a gym with a floor that slopes, has numerous rips in the flooring, air handling problems that result in ceiling paint continuously peeling and falling to the floor, two sets of stairs at one end of the gym that are so close to the playing area that students are at risk of serious injury, a padded I-beam that impedes the exit off the stage, and bleachers that are a hazard when pulled out because they are so close to the lines on the gym floor, all of which impact instruction
- extreme temperature fluctuation in numerous classrooms caused in part by outdated windows
- use of hot plates in science labs that result in blown fuses
- constant problems with running water in art rooms that cause the interruption of art instruction that requires water
- noise infiltration from band into algebra rooms, from music labs into geometry classrooms, and from the gym into art rooms located on the floor below
- lack of soundproofing in special education rooms making it difficult to test students
- interruptions in the availability of computer technology when computers cannot be wheeled outdoors to portable classrooms in inclement weather
- numerous small classrooms that limit the use of varied instructional strategies
- the inability to darken some classrooms
- inadequate storage space necessitating the use of classroom space, as in art, for storage, thus limiting already cramped classroom space

Community Resources for Learning:

- no intercom in the boys' locker room
- bus exhaust fumes in the girls' locker room
- old fashioned radiators that pose a burn hazard
- no heat in the male physical education teacher's room
- use of multiple portable propane burners because of propane leaks that necessitated shutting off propane lines running underneath science classrooms
- water-stained ceiling tiles from roof leaks
- two shabby, worn, 20-year old, detached portable classrooms, some with taped ceilings, carpeting patched with duct tape, lifting siding, and torn screens
- no doors or partial doors to student restrooms
- the positioning of a secretary's desk in front of a door to a storage area in guidance

Due to the serious nature of the concerns that were confirmed at the time of the visit to the school and the issues identified at the time of the decennial visit that remain unresolved because of the State's position on funding new buildings and renovations, the Commission has voted to place the school on probation.

The Commission will review the school's correspondence related to probationary status for the school at its June 2009 meeting. In the meantime since there is considerable immediacy in the need to resolve facilities and other problems at Lisbon High School, the Commission has asked that school officials

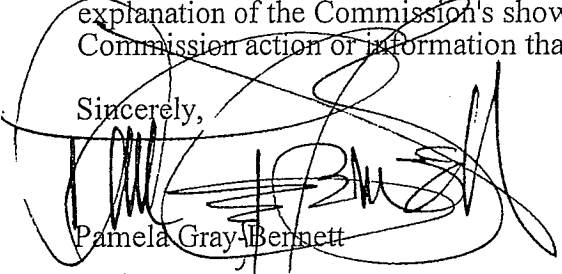
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submit a Special Progress Report, due September 1, 2009 and scheduled for review at the September 2009 Commission meeting, providing detailed responses to each of the following recommendations:

- immediately address all health and safety concerns, including the gym floor, the lack of communication in the boys' locker room, exhaust fumes in the girls' locker room, lack of heat in the male physical education teacher's room, unsafe use of multiple portable propane burners, absence of doors on the restrooms
- immediately develop and begin implementation of a short-term plan to address all identified facilities concerns
- develop a long-term plan and time-line to address serious facilities issues including the gym floor, sound-proofing, issues with running water, extreme temperature fluctuations, the shabby portables, and small classrooms
- report further progress on attempts to obtain state funding for a new building or renovation project

We have enclosed copies of the Association's Policy and Procedure for Appeal of Adverse Action, Policy on Release of Information, and previous notification letters to the school 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-Bernett

PGB/pt
Enclosures

cc: Shannon Welsh, Superintendent, Lisbon School Department
Prudence Grant, Chair, Lisbon School Committee
Victor D. Mercurio, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools