



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

NEASC Commission on Public Schools

# Standards for Accreditation 2023

for public schools, districts, centers, and programs  
seeking NEASC Accreditation



A Vision for Learning

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES  
Commission on Public Schools

1115 Westford Street, Third Floor, Lowell, MA 01851 USA  
Phone 781-425-7700 | Toll free (US) 855-886-3272 | [www.neasc.org/public](http://www.neasc.org/public)

© NEASC 2023

# Standards for Accreditation 2023

*for public schools, districts, centers, and programs seeking NEASC Accreditation*

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Schools requires schools, districts, centers, and programs (hereafter collectively referred to as “schools”) to demonstrate alignment with the Standards for Accreditation.

The 2023 Standards for Accreditation promote an effective learning organization with the capacity to meet the needs of all students through continuous reflection and growth.

<b>STANDARD 1</b> Learning Culture	<b>Learning Culture promotes shared values and responsibility for achieving the school's vision.</b>
<b>STANDARD 2</b> Student Learning	<b>Student Learning practices maximize the impact of learning for each student.</b>
<b>STANDARD 3</b> Professional Practices	<b>Professional Practices ensure that practices and structures support and improve student learning.</b>
<b>STANDARD 4</b> Learning Support	<b>Learning Support ensures that the school has appropriate systems to support student learning and well-being.</b>
<b>STANDARD 5</b> Learning Resources	<b>Learning Resources ensure that the school has the resources necessary to meet the learning needs of all students.</b>

<b>Principles of Effective Practice</b> Each Standard includes Principles of Effective Practice, which define the expectations for that Standard. Schools reflect on and report progress in aligning with the Principles for each Standard.	<b>Descriptors of Effective Practice</b> Descriptors of Effective Practice serve as examples of what each Principle looks like in practice in a school. Descriptors are guidance or benchmarks to assist schools in aligning with each Principle.
--	--

# Foundational Elements

The Foundational Elements represent essential building blocks for each Standard. At a minimum, schools accredited by NEASC must align with each Foundational Element. Schools not yet aligned with the Foundational Elements are expected to prioritize work to ensure alignment.

STANDARD	FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS
<b>STANDARD 1</b> Learning Culture	<b>1.1a</b> The school community provides a socially and emotionally safe environment for students and adults.  <b>1.2a</b> The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.
<b>STANDARD 2</b> Student Learning	<b>2.2a</b> There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school.
<b>STANDARD 3</b> Professional Practices	<b>3.1a</b> The school has a current school growth/improvement plan.  <b>3.6a</b> All career and technical education programs have a program advisory committee and implement a systematic program review process.
<b>STANDARD 4</b> Learning Support	<b>4.1a</b> The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners.
<b>STANDARD 5</b> Learning Resources	<b>5.1a</b> The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.  <b>5.5a</b> The school provides a physically safe environment for students and adults.

## STANDARD 1

# Learning Culture

The school provides a safe learning culture that ensures equity and fosters shared values among learners, educators, families, and members of the school community. These shared values drive student learning as well as policy, practice, and decision-making while promoting a spirit of collaboration, shared ownership, pride, leadership, social responsibility, and civic engagement. The school community sets high standards for student learning, fosters a growth mindset, and facilitates continuous school improvement to realize the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

### Principles of Effective Practice

### Descriptors of Effective Practice

#### 1.1

**The school community provides a safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture that demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.**

#### The school community:

- builds and maintains a socially, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment for students and adults
- creates policies and protocols that define and support respectful treatment of all members of the school community and considers the experiences of historically marginalized communities
- emphasizes and strengthens understanding of, and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT

#### 1.1a

**The school community provides a socially and emotionally safe environment for students and adults.**

#### The school community:

- builds and maintains a socially, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment for students and adults
- creates policies and protocols that define and support respectful treatment of all members of the school community and consider the experiences of historically marginalized communities

---

## 1.2

**The school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate drive student learning, professional practices, learning supports, and the provision and allocation of learning resources.**

### **The school community:**

- develops, implements, and regularly reviews the written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success
- ensures the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate are known and understood by all stakeholders
- ensures the core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate are actively reflected in the school culture and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations
- ensures the core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate include the school's commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

## **FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

### 1.2a

**The school has a written document describing its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success.**

### **The school community:**

- uses a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research to develop its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate
- creates a vision of a graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary for future success

---

### 1.3

**The school community takes collective responsibility for the well-being of every student and can demonstrate how each student is known, valued, and connected to the school community.**

#### **The school community:**

- creates opportunities for students to connect with adults and peers to support their social, emotional, and physical well-being
- provides a balance of academic, social, and civic opportunities to meet the needs of diverse learners
- ensures that each student is known by an adult mentor in the school, or through some other formal process, to assist them in achieving the school's vision of the graduate
- honors individuality among all community members and provides positive opportunities for extended learning and growth

---

### 1.4

**The professional staff commits to continuous improvement through research, collaborative learning, innovation, and reflection.**

#### **The professional staff:**

- employs a growth mindset and uses innovative methods to achieve common goals
- commits to research-based instruction and reflective practice
- creates the conditions and trust necessary for the full and active participation of all educators
- collaborates as problem-solvers and co-learners

---

### 1.5

**The school's culture promotes intellectual risk-taking and personal and professional growth for educators and learners.**

#### **The school culture:**

- promotes a shared sense of agency and responsibility among educators and learners
  - ensures educators and learners understand that learning from mistakes is an important part of intellectual and personal growth
  - promotes norms and protocols that support respectful discourse, including diverse perspectives, experimentation, innovation, and a disposition to listen well and learn from others
  - emphasizes the importance of persistence
-

---

**1.6**

**The school has an inclusive leadership model reflecting the school community.**

**The school community:**

- ensures the principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that sets high standards for student achievement and fosters a growth mindset
- involves educators, students, and families in decision-making, specifically elevating the voices of historically marginalized communities
- provides opportunities for student leadership, including student government and career and technical education student organizations
- ensures the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive
- ensures the principal is given appropriate decision-making authority to lead the school

---

**1.7**

**The school culture fosters civic and community engagement.**

**The school culture:**

- encourages social awareness and understanding of local, national, and global perspectives
  - encourages learning experiences that connect to or make an impact on the community beyond the school campus
-

## STANDARD 2

# Student Learning

The school has a vision of the graduate that includes the attainment of transferable skills, disciplinary/interdisciplinary knowledge, understandings, and dispositions necessary to prepare learners for their future. Students are assured consistent learning outcomes through a defined curricular experience and can demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a variety of creative ways. Students actively participate in authentic learning experiences and practice the skills and habits of mind to regularly reflect upon, and take ownership of, their learning.

### Principles of Effective Practice

### Descriptors of Effective Practice

#### 2.1

**The school's vision of the graduate is defined by measurable criteria and learners receive feedback on their progress toward proficiency.**

#### **The school:**

- defines what proficiency looks like for each aspect within the vision with specific and measurable criteria for success
- integrates opportunities for students to practice the skills within the vision and receive feedback on their progress throughout the curriculum
- embeds the vision into curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
- develops and implements a formal process to assess and communicate each individual learner progress toward achieving the school's vision of the graduate to learners and their families
- develops an annual report on whole-school progress toward learners' achievement of the vision of the graduate



---

## 2.2

There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments that includes units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills and integrates the school's vision of the graduate.

### The written curriculum includes:

- units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices
- opportunities for all students to see themselves represented within the curriculum
- competency-based elements for all career and technical education programs with pathways leading to licensure, certification, and post-secondary education
- connections to the school's vision of the graduate

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT

### 2.2a

There is a written curriculum in a consistent format for all courses in all departments across the school.

### The written curriculum includes:

- units of study with guiding/essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, instructional strategies, and assessment practices
- competency-based elements for all career and technical education programs with pathways leading to licensure, certification, and post-secondary education

## 2.3

The written curriculum emphasizes deep understanding, through aspects such as interdisciplinary learning, project-based learning, and authentic learning experiences.

### The written curriculum:

- makes connections to prior knowledge across disciplines
  - places emphasis on learner application of knowledge and skills
  - includes discipline-specific, higher order thinking and transferable skills and dispositions
  - embeds skills and competencies necessary to attain the school's vision of the graduate
-

---

## 2.4

**Instructional practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.**

### **Instructional practices include:**

- strategically differentiating, individualizing, and personalizing based on the needs of all learners
- using formative assessment to adjust instruction
- organizational grouping and tiered intervention strategies that meet the needs of each learner
- structure and support to provide all learners with access to rigorous learning opportunities

---

## 2.5

**Students are active learners who have opportunities to lead their learning.**

### **Active learning includes:**

- student agency through meaningful, relevant, and self-initiated learning experiences
- opportunities for students to set goals and reflect upon the results to guide learning
- application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
- pursuit of personal interests, and opportunities for creative expression

---

## 2.6

**Learners regularly engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills.**

### **Learners engage in:**

- deliberately designed learning and assessment experiences that are cognitively challenging and require learners to develop and exercise a full range of thinking skills and learning dispositions
  - analysis, synthesis, creativity, making connections, and understanding relationships
  - investigation and examination
  - critical and creative thinking
-

---

2.7

Learners experience a wide range of assessment practices to support and improve learning.

**Effective assessment practices include:**

- formative and summative assessments to gather information about student progress and inform instruction
- common assessments that ensure consistent and equitable learning opportunities across grades and courses
- specific and measurable criteria for success provided to learners before assessments
- regular and consistent checks for understanding in ways that engage every learner’s thinking including self-assessment
- presentations of learning to authentic audiences, including students, families, community members, and professionals

---

2.8

Learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning.

**Learners are provided with:**

- multiple and varied opportunities over time to demonstrate their learning
- consistent, systematic, specific, and timely corrective feedback
- opportunities and time necessary to revise and improve their work
- teacher and peer feedback and self-reflection to guide next steps in learning
- separate grading, reporting, and feedback on work habits and academic skills

---

2.9

Learners use technology across all curricular areas to support, enhance, and demonstrate their learning.

**Learners use technology in informed, effective, and ethical ways to:**

- access, support, document, and supplement their learning
  - research, create, and problem-solve
  - personalize the pace of learning
  - share work with an audience beyond the school community
  - collaborate digitally to support learning
-

STANDARD 3

# Professional Practices

The school maintains and implements a school growth/improvement plan, organizational practices, and productive community relationships to meet and support student learning needs. Educators engage in ongoing reflection, collaboration, and professional development to improve practice and examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, programs, and services.

**Principles  
of Effective Practice**

**Descriptors  
of Effective Practice**

**3.1**

The school engages all stakeholders in the development and implementation of a school growth/improvement plan, which reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate.

**The school develops and regularly updates a school growth/improvement plan that:**

- reflects the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate
- includes school-specific and measurable goals with expected learning impacts and criteria for success
- is informed by the perspectives of stakeholders and current research
- is aligned with district priorities and the Standards for Accreditation
- informs decision-making in the school

**FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

**3.1a**

The school has a current school improvement/growth plan.

**The school has a plan that:**

- includes school-specific goals
- informs decision-making in the school

---

### 3.2

**Educators engage in ongoing reflection, formal and informal collaboration, and professional development.**

#### **Educators, individually and collaboratively:**

- engage in authentic professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
- develop consistent grading and assessment practices aligned with the school's beliefs about learning
- engage in formal and informal professional development, including peer observation, and apply skills and knowledge to practice
- maintain currency with best practices and content-specific instructional practices
- engage in supervision and evaluation using effective and timely feedback to improve practices that result in increased student learning

---

### 3.3

**Educators examine evidence of student learning and well-being to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, and programs and services.**

#### **Educators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence, including:**

- student work
- data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, including common course and common grade-level assessments
- disaggregated data of participation, performance, and experiences by subgroups
- individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's vision of the graduate
- data from sending schools and post-secondary data
- feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other educators, supervisors, families, and the school community

#### **Use the examination of evidence to:**

- improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
  - analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement
  - evaluate and improve programs and services, such as health, counseling, library/information, and student support services
  - emphasize the use of evidence-based research, reflective practice, data, and feedback to improve learners' educational experiences
-

---

3.4

**Collaborative structures and processes support coordination and implementation of curriculum.**

**The school uses structures and processes to ensure:**

- a formal, ongoing curriculum cycle of review and revision for all courses in all departments
- effective curricular coordination within and among each academic area, department, and program in the school
- vertical articulation within the school and with sending schools in the district
- clear alignment between the written, taught, and learned curriculum

---

3.5

**School-wide organizational practices are designed to meet the learning needs of each student.**

**Organizational practices include:**

- access to challenging academic experiences for all learners
- inclusive learning environments and opportunities for students to learn with and from students who are different from them, such as heterogeneously grouped courses
- equitable inclusion of students from historically underrepresented groups in all courses, programs, and opportunities, including career and technical education programs
- written admission policies that identify equitable enrollment criteria for students and an equitable process for determining student enrollment allotments, if applicable, from participating and sending schools

---

3.6

**Educators develop productive student, family, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support learning.**

**Educators:**

- enable and promote relationships with the community, businesses, and higher education institutions to support authentic student learning experiences
  - engage students and families as partners in each learner's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school
  - develop effective career and technical education program advisories and community, business, and higher education partnerships that support work-based learning
-

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT

3.6a

All career and technical education programs have a program advisory committee and implement a systematic program review process.

**The school:**

- has effective career and technical education program advisories
- completes regular program reviews

**STANDARD 4**

# Learning Support

The school has timely, directed, and coordinated interventions for all students. The school provides targeted supports to meet each student’s individual needs, including counseling services, health services, library/information services, and other appropriate support services to assist each student in meeting the school’s vision of the graduate.

**Principles  
of Effective Practice**

**Descriptors  
of Effective Practice**

**4.1**

**All students receive appropriate intervention strategies to support their academic, social, and emotional success.**

**The school provides:**

- a range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student’s success and well-being
- a formal tiered system of support for identified and non-identified students
- a formal, defined process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance
- outreach to families about available support services, especially to those most in need

**FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

**4.1a**

**The school has intervention strategies designed to support learners.**

**The school provides:**

- a process to identify and refer students who need additional assistance
- a range of intervention strategies for students



---

#### 4.2

All students receive counseling services that meet their personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling needs from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

#### School counseling services include:

- adequate, certified/licensed personnel and support staff to deliver effective services to students
- a written, developmental program
- regular meetings with students to provide personal, social, emotional, academic, career, and college counseling
- collaboration with community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
- the use of graduate follow-up studies to improve programming and curriculum development
- opportunities for students to identify career aptitudes and interests

---

#### 4.3

All students receive health services that ensure their physical and emotional well-being from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

#### School health services:

- have adequate, certified/licensed personnel and support staff to deliver appropriate health services to students
- include preventative health services and direct intervention services
- ensure the use of an appropriate referral process
- are informed by ongoing student health assessments

---

#### 4.4

All students receive library/information services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.

#### Library/information services:

- have adequate, certified/licensed personnel and support staff possessing professional expertise in literature, research, technology, and inquiry
- ensure personnel and staff are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum and instructional practices and support teachers in enhancing student learning
- provide professional support to classroom teachers to ensure high-quality instruction on information literacy, research techniques, citing sources, and accessing literature from a variety of genres
- are responsive to students' interests and needs to support independent reading and lifelong learning
- assist students in becoming active learners who have opportunities to lead their learning

---

**The library/information facility:**

- has up-to-date technology, materials, supplies, and furnishings
- has a collection that supports the curriculum and is reflective of the diversity of the student body
- has a physical setting that encourages collaboration among students, opportunities for inquiry, and authentic learning
- is open and available for students and adults before, during, and after school

---

**4.5**

**English language learners and students with special needs and 504 plans receive appropriate programs and services that support their learning from adequate, certified/licensed personnel.**

**Support services:**

- have adequate, certified/licensed personnel and support staff to meet students' needs
- include collaboration among all educators, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to meet each student's goals
- include appropriate and challenging educational experiences
- provide inclusive learning opportunities and instruction

STANDARD 5

# Learning Resources

The school has adequate and appropriate time, funding, and facilities to support the realization of its core values, beliefs about learning, and vision of the graduate. The school and school community provide time, funding, and facilities for student learning and support; teacher collaboration and professional growth; and full implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs in the school. The school has appropriate plans, protocols, and infrastructure to ensure consistent delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.

**Principles  
of Effective Practice**

**Descriptors  
of Effective Practice**

**5.1**

**The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that support the delivery of high-quality curriculum, programs, and services.**

**The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that:**

- fully support the delivery of the curriculum, programs, and services
- are adequately sized for the school community
- have appropriate spaces to support student learning and the curriculum
- are clean and well-maintained
- have appropriate mechanical systems
- meet all applicable federal and state laws and comply with local fire, health, and safety regulations

**Residential programs:**

- create and maintain an environment that allows students to learn and practice independent and community living skills
- provide a safe, secure, clean, and attractive physical and social living environment for students that is appropriate to their varied needs and levels of maturity

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT

5.1a

The school site and plant support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.

**The community and district provide school buildings and facilities that:**

- support the delivery of curriculum, programs, and services
- are clean and well-maintained
- meet all applicable federal and state laws and comply with local fire, health, and safety regulations

5.2

The community and the district's governing body provide time to enable research-based instruction, professional growth, and the development, implementation, and improvement of school programs and services.

**The community and the district's governing body provide:**

- time to support research-based instruction, professional collaboration among educators, learning needs of all students, and student programs and services
- time for professional development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum, and improvement of instruction using assessment results and current research

5.3

The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable financial resources to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities and employ a review process of its financial practices.

**The community and the district's governing body provide adequate and dependable financial resources for:**

- a wide range of school programs and services
- sufficient professional and support staff to ensure appropriate class sizes and teacher load
- professional development
- library/information services to provide a wide range of materials and technologies in support of the school's curriculum
- a full range of technology and support to fully implement the curriculum
- sufficient instructional materials and supplies to fully implement the curriculum
- proper maintenance and replacement of furniture, technology, and equipment

**The community and the district's governing body:**

- ensure that records of all funds collected and disbursed are audited at appropriate intervals according to local and state requirements
- follows generally accepted financial policies and procedures

---

5.4

The community and the district's governing body has short-term and long-term plans to address the capital and maintenance needs of the school building, facilities, and technology.

**The community and the district's governing body:**

- schedule regular maintenance and repair of the school building and facilities
  - develop and implement a plan to address enrollment changes and staffing needs
  - develop and implement a comprehensive technology plan
  - develop and implement a comprehensive capital improvement plan
- 

5.5

The school has infrastructure and protocols to provide a physically safe environment for students and adults.

**The school maintains:**

- infrastructure designed to support a physically safe environment for students and adults
- policies, processes, and protocols regarding safety for students and adults
- written documentation that describes responses for various situations
- a positive working relationship and protocols with emergency services personnel
- a school crisis team that meets regularly to review and revise protocols
- safety data sheets (SDSs) and written and applied safety testing in all relevant areas

**FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

5.5a

The school provides a physically safe environment for students and adults.

**The school maintains:**

- infrastructure designed to support a physically safe environment for students and adults
- policies, processes, and protocols regarding safety for students and adults