

## Guide for the Self-Study – 2007 Edition

The self-study is an exercise in analysis and planning. It presupposes work done in advance that provides background information. The self-study should be inclusive of all faculty and should engage others as the school deems appropriate. The Self-Study Report consists of two parts: (1) review and documentation of compliance with the NEASC Standards and (2) reflection, formulation of recommendations, and identifying issues for further discussion in response to the findings of the self-study committees.

### Preparation for the Self-Study

Prior to beginning the self-study the school must gather background information that will inform the work of the committees, as follows:

1. **The Mission.** The school should review the existing mission statement through an inclusive process and revise as needed.
2. **The Curriculum.** The school must have in place a description of the curriculum in a format appropriate to the school. At the minimum, the curriculum needs to address issues of continuity and coherence, serve as a basis for curriculum discussion and development, provide guidance for new teachers, and present information for prospective families.
3. **Reflection on Major Programs.** Subcommittees, including a range of perspectives, should be formed to examine each major program area (subject areas, departments, and central non-academic programs) and write a brief report commenting on:
  - a. the contribution to the mission,
  - b. the consistency of activities with the school's beliefs about teaching and learning,
  - c. planned continuity across grade levels,
  - d. appropriateness of offerings for the full range of the student body,
  - e. pedagogical approaches employed,
  - f. contribution to achieving the school's goals for students and students' goals for themselves,
  - g. adequacy of available resources,
  - h. related professional development, and
  - i. ways in which the program might be strengthened.

These reports will be included in the Supplementary Materials Inventory and will provide the basis for the school's overall response to Standards 4, 5, and 6 in the self-study.

4. **Surveys.** The school will survey parents, faculty, students (middle and secondary schools), and alumni/ae (secondary schools). The school may design its own surveys, but should include questions based on the survey questions suggested by NEASC. The results should be summarized, given to all self-study committees, and included in the Supplementary Materials for the visiting committee.
5. **Statistics.** The school will compile statistics on admissions and on student performance.
6. **Documents.** The school will gather together existing policy documents, plans, and handbooks.
7. **Finances.** The school will prepare historical information (for at least two prior years) on school finances and will schedule a financial review or audit by an independent accountant or arrange for an approved alternative report on finances.

### Self-Study Cover Sheet and Introduction

The school must complete the Self-Study Cover Data Sheet and write a brief introduction to the Self-Study that provides a narrative description of the history, mission, and culture of the school. This is intended to give an introduction to the school to the visiting committee and the Commission when they review the Self-Study Report. Parts of it may be copied and included in the visiting committee report.

## **Self-Study Part I: Reviewing the Standards**

Each Standard must be addressed separately in the Self-Study Report. The school should appoint a number of self-study committees, each responsible for one or more Standards. The self-study committee(s) for the overall program Standards (4-6) will include representatives from all major program areas. The committees should proceed as follows:

1. Gather and review relevant information from program subcommittee reports, surveys, handbooks, policy manuals, compilations of data, etc.
2. Discuss the Standard and suggested indicators, identify other possible indicators relevant to the school, assess compliance with the Standard, and identify questions to be asked and people to be interviewed.
3. Interview individuals and convene groups to discuss the school's compliance with the Standard and to explore further actions that the school might take in this regard.
4. Draft the section of the self-study for the Standard. It should include four elements:
  - a. a narrative description of the school's position with regard to the Standard
  - b. a description of the process followed by the committee in inquiring into the Standard
  - c. documentation that the Standard is met or a detailed explanation of proposed steps to bring the school into compliance, the resources available, and the timetable for this to be accomplished
  - d. rating of the school on the degree to which it meets the Standard
  - e. recommendations for ways in which the school might strengthen itself in regard to the Standard.

## **Self-Study Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion**

An assignment as comprehensive and self-reflective as the preparation of Part I of the Self-Study will generate a variety of future oriented questions, concerns, ideas, recommendations, and commitments from those who participate in drafting it and those who review it before submission to NEASC. Part II of the Self-Study asks the school to draw together and prioritize these ideas into a thoughtful, reflective, creative summary of the school's most significant concerns, hopes and dreams for the future.

Part II of the Self-Study is intended to be a macro-look at major findings, presented in a one to three page report. The school may present its findings in any of several formats:

- as recommendations that are *self-identified* and are action-oriented;
- as issues for further discussion in which the goal is to extend important conversations generated by the self-study;
- as a combination of both action items and discussion items.

NOTE: Specific action plans must be presented in Part II for any Standard on which the school rates itself as 3 (needs attention) or as 4-6 (failed).

## **Review and Edit**

The school might consider asking an outside reader (an alumnus/a, trustee, retired teacher, parent or other knowledgeable person who was not actively involved in the self-study) to review the final draft for clarity and completeness.

## **Letter from Head of School**

The head of school will present a written report to the members of the visiting committee that may identify actions which have already been taken by the school in response to the self-study, express his or her feelings about the self-study, raise any questions or concerns, and discuss priorities for the next several years.