

Accreditation report notes progress at RMHS

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ADVOCATE STAFF

Innovative programs, expanded academic offerings and creative approaches to education helped Reading Memorial High School earn laudatory comments on its recent accreditation review.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) recently completed its review of the high school's five-year progress report and decided to continue Reading's accreditation. In issuing its decision, NEASC noted several academic, administrative and capital areas that impressed the review board.

"This (report) is telling us that our five-year progress report is accepted and that we've done what they've asked of us," said School Superintendent Dr. Harry Harutunian.

Every 10 years, NEASC conducts a comprehensive review of its member schools, evaluating them on everything from curriculum, academic performance and administration, to athletics and the state of their physical plant.

From this, the review board rates the school, reports areas of excellence and concerns, and makes recommendations for improvements. It also decides whether to grant accreditation to the school — which Reading has consistently obtained.

"What this tells colleges is that we meet a standard set by the New England Association," Harutunian said.

It is during the two- and five-year progress reports that NEASC

reviews the progress made on its recommendations and the areas of concern.

The progress report contained several positive aspects, but NEASC was particularly pleased with the following: ~~\$200,000~~

- plans to complete the upgrade of science rooms and laboratories by the end of the summer;

- the addition of five interdisciplinary courses;

- the hiring of five new teachers;
- efforts to address concerns related to class size;

- the inclusion of career guidance activities and services as part of the school's development guidance program;

- the positive impact of the School-to-Work program;

- the ongoing work of the professional staff in the use of a variety of assessment practices and the use of assessment results in curriculum development;

- the allocation of \$1.8 million for repairs and improvements to the school's physical plant;

- the hiring of additional custodial and maintenance staff;

- the addition of two new science courses and one math course to meet the ability levels of interested students;

- the creation of computer labs in several departments;

- and, increased course requirements for all students.

While the report is positive, NEASC is requesting a special progress report be filed in December updating progress on the implementation of the technology plan, confirming the introduction of

high-speed Internet access in the library, details on the progress made in resolving facility needs, and efforts made to improve the upkeep and maintenance of equipment in the art room.

NEASC is also asking for additional information on plans to ren-

ovate the existing high school or constructing a new building.

"These are the kinds of things they ask me to respond to," said high school Principal Frank Orlando. "I feel very confident that we'll fair well in addressing these other areas."

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