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Contact: Jackie Piques, Interim Director of Communications & Grants,
jpiques@k12.somerville.ma.us

Collaborative Conference Group to Visit Somerville High School as Part of Ongoing Accreditation Process

SHS launched an accreditation process in Fall 2022; Collaborative Conference is the next step in the multi-year process to attain accreditation by regional review board.

Somerville, MA - Somerville High School Interim Co-Principals Alicia Kersten and Sebastian LaGambina announced today that five educators from outside the Somerville Public Schools district will conduct an on-site Collaborative Conference visit to Somerville High School (SHS) on April 11 and 12, 2023. The Collaborative Conference is the next step in the Accreditation process conducted by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Public Schools. Carl Johnson, Principal of Plainville High School in Plainville, CT, will chair the Collaborative Conference visiting team of educators. Mr. Johnson has had extensive experience in the association's accreditation process.

In addition to the chair, the other members of the team are educators and administrators from a variety of schools in Massachusetts, and include Assistant Chair Kelley St. Coeur (principal of Ashland High School, Ashland, MA), Monique Symes (teacher at Boston Community Leadership Academy/McCormack, Hyde Park, MA), Gail Farrington (teacher at Mansfield High School, Mansfield, MA), and Jeffrey Lizotte (principal of Oakmont Regional High School, Ashburnham, MA).

The visit follows an extensive Self-Reflection period, which includes a community-wide, comprehensive school assessment and planning process. During Self-Reflection, an internal team of SHS staff wrote a detailed report outlining how Somerville High School meets the NEASC standards for accreditation. The Collaborative Conference team of educators will observe the high school first-hand during their visit, talk to administrators, staff, students, and parents/guardians, and review all materials that were prepared by the SHS faculty during the Self-Reflection. The materials provided to the NEASC team include the report, as well as evidence supporting assertions in the report that include school documents, district information, and student work. Within the next six months after the Collaborative Conference, the NEASC will send a report to Somerville High School outlining priorities and goals for the next two years.

Co-Principal Alicia Kersten said, "The purpose of this Collaborative Conference is to review and determine from an outside professional viewpoint the extent to which the school is aligned to the Standards for Accreditation and identify priority areas for growth and improvement. As part of the Conference, the team will meet with school constituents, review the school's Self-Reflection, visit a number of classes, and examine examples of student work submitted by the school. During the comprehensive Self-Reflection, the faculty attempted to identify the school's strengths and determined those areas in which changes would be beneficial."



Collaborative Conference Chair Mr. Johnson said, “Our purpose in visiting Somerville High School is to assist the faculty in its pursuit of quality education for its students.” Interim Co-Principal Alicia Kersten pointed out, “The members of the team are contributing their services to the school. This spirit of professional collaboration is one of the noted features of the New England Association. The goal of an accreditation visit is to stimulate a continuing drive for improvement in the school.”

The NEASC Accreditation review process is normally a 10-year cycle with the last Accreditation review occurring in 2010. The review cycle was necessarily extended for Somerville High School in order to accommodate construction of the new building and the pandemic. At the end of this review cycle, a team from NEASC will conduct a final visit, called the decennial visit. The NEASC team will consist of the same administrators and educators that visited during the Collaborative Conference, where possible. Somerville High School’s decennial visit is scheduled for spring 2025, at which time the NEASC team will determine whether Somerville High School made the recommended improvements and adjustments outlined in their report. The results of the decennial visit determine Somerville High School’s Accreditation status.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, founded in 1885, is the oldest accrediting agency in the country and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the sole agency to award Accreditation to PK-12 schools, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in New England. The NEASC Commission on Public Schools works with individual schools to improve the quality of education through a continuous process of evaluation and Accreditation.

Somerville High School is a comprehensive high school with over 1,300 students in a newly renovated and state-of-the-art facility. More than 50 languages are spoken among the diverse student body. Somerville High School prides itself on meeting the needs of all of its students.

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