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COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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**CORRECTED LETTER**

February 23, 2010

Teresa Sullivan  
Principal  
Abington High School  
201 Gliniewicz Way  
Abington, MA 02351

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its January 24-25, 2010 meeting, reviewed the Report of Substantive Change of Abington High School, continued the school's accreditation, but placed the school on warning for concerns regarding its adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation on School Resources for Learning and Community Resources for Learning. In accordance with Commission policy, the school will remain on warning until all identified concerns have been resolved.

The concerns prompting the warning status include, but are not limited to, the following:

School Resources for Learning:

- the reduction of the certified librarian's time at the high school to four days a week, resulting in the closing of the facility, a center of learning in the high school, limiting student and teacher use on a regular, daily basis
- the reduction of one of the school's three guidance counselor's position to three days a week, limiting students' access to their assigned counselor on a daily basis
- the inability of the school to ensure that a student in need of immediate counseling services receives those services in a timely and appropriate manner

Community Resources for Learning:

- the negative impact of the reductions in the school district's FY10 operating budget of \$1,387,819 and the resultant reduction in the high school's operating budget of \$497,960 for the current school year

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- the elimination of all directors/department heads positions who have had responsibilities for the day-to-day operation of their curriculum areas, including teacher supervision and budgetary matters which are now assumed by the building administrators
- the elimination of full-time teaching positions in the areas of English, art, special education, wellness, mathematics, and science
- the further reduction to 3/5<sup>th</sup>'s of teaching positions in the areas of English, mathematics, business, science, and social studies
- the elimination of paraprofessional positions in the areas of special education and library/media services
- the furloughing of all building administrators, faculty, and support staff for three days during the school year, resulting in the reduction of professional development days
- the reduction in the number (31) of course offerings resulting in fewer scheduling options for students
- the increased user fees for students participating in interscholastic athletics and marching band
- the elimination of stipends for some activity advisors

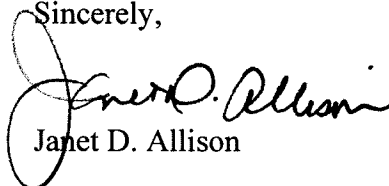
The Commission requests that school officials submit a Special Progress Report by August 1, 2010 describing action taken to complete the following highlighted recommendations:

- submit the FY11 line item budget for textbooks, instructional supplies, and materials, technology, and staffing levels and assess the level of adequacy for each
- cite progress in providing a full-time library media specialist to ensure the school is in compliance with the Commission's Guideline on Library/Media Services which has been enclosed for your convenience
- submit the counselor/counselee caseload
- cite specific practices in place to ensure that a student is able to access a guidance counselor at anytime during the school day
- assess the impact and report on the loss of directors/department heads on the day-to-day operation of their respective department area(s), including teacher supervision, curriculum, instructional, and assessment processes, and budget preparation and allocation
- report class sizes and teacher's student loads in all departments that have experienced staffing reductions
- assess the impact of the increase in user fees for athletics and marching band on student participation, citing the number of participants during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years
- assess the impact of the loss of professional development days as a result of the furloughing of staff

Teresa Sullivan  
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The school's warning status will be reviewed when the Commission considers the Special Progress Report. Consistent with the Commission's follow-up procedures, the Special Progress Report should include an electronic signature of the principal and chair of the Follow-Up Committee and be sent electronically to the Commission office at the following address: [cpsreports@neasc.org](mailto:cpsreports@neasc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet D. Allison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Janet D. Allison

JDA/sb  
Enclosure

cc: Peter G. Schafer, Superintendent, Abington Public Schools  
Brenda Pignone, Chair, Abington School Committee  
Victor D. Mercurio, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools

# Commission Guidelines

The following guidelines have been approved by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to be used in its deliberation about the accreditation status of member schools:

## Accessibility to Facilities for the Handicapped

The Commission expects that the entire school facility and all programs will be accessible to the handicapped. If such is not the case, school officials shall provide details on how the school meets the needs of the handicapped in compliance with state and federal law or shall provide an action plan to make the school and all programs fully accessible to the handicapped.

## Counselor/Counselee Ratio

Each member school should have a student/counselor ratio not to exceed 300:1. If this caseload is exceeded the school will be asked to demonstrate that the full range of students' guidance needs are being met including, but not limited to, regular student individual and group meetings with guidance counselors, the provision of personal, career, and college counseling, student course selection, and personal wellness. The school should also clarify the guidance counselors' roles in crisis intervention committee/teams, mediation and violence prevention programs, special education teams, and working with community mental health providers and other partnerships.

## Dropouts

Schools reporting high or increased dropout rates shall describe and assess the effectiveness of preventive programs and services offered to address the dropout problem. The Commission shall expect that reasonable progress will be shown by the school in decreasing the dropout rate.

## Health Services

Each member school should have nursing services available in the building throughout the school day to provide preventive health services and direct intervention for students. If a school does not have such services, it will be asked to demonstrate that the following comprehensive services are being provided: health records are maintained for every student, immunizations are current, physical exams are provided as required by state statute, students have

health screenings, medications are administered as required by state or local law, there are appropriate referrals, there are appropriate emergency response mechanisms, and there are ongoing student health assessments.

## School Librarian/Media Specialist

Each member school with 400 or more students should have a full-time, certified librarian/media specialist. If a school does not meet this guideline, it will be asked to indicate how adequate library services are being provided.

## Schools Requesting Postponements

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools will grant a postponement of a school's scheduled decennial evaluation if the school can demonstrate that extraordinary circumstances preclude the school from completing a thorough and accurate self-study or the team from making an accurate assessment of the extent to which the school meets the Standards for Accreditation.

A school requesting a postponement based on a restructuring initiative must (1) explain the scope and comprehensiveness of the restructuring initiative, (2) demonstrate that the restructuring initiative incorporates the best practices articulated in the Standards for Accreditation, (3) clarify where the school is or will be in the process of restructuring at the time of the self-study and the team visit, and (4) clarify how the restructuring process will so negatively impact and be disruptive to the teaching and learning process that the school and/or the team could not accurately assess the extent to which the school adheres to the Standards for Accreditation.

A school requesting a postponement based on a facilities/renovation project or extraordinary circumstances must demonstrate the extent to which the project or extraordinary circumstances will so negatively impact and be disruptive to the teaching and learning process that the school and/or the team could not accurately assess the extent to which the school adheres to the Standards for Accreditation.

## **Schools With Facilities Deficiencies**

Schools placed on warning for facilities deficiencies are expected to develop a plan and timeline to resolve identified deficiencies in two years and to seek and secure funding to resolve such deficiencies within five years. Failure to demonstrate such proactive efforts and progress will prompt the Commission to place such schools on probation.

## **Use of Portable Classrooms or Separate Buildings**

Schools with portable classrooms or separate buildings must demonstrate that the facilities support the instructional program, are safe, connected to the main public address system to ensure appropriate communication, connected to the school network, readily accessible to restrooms, are handicapped accessible, and do not isolate students, teachers, or programs.