April 6, 2006

Robert A. Mitchell
Principal
Chariho Regional High School
453 Switch Road
Wood River Junction, RI 02894

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools, at its March 26-27, 2006 meeting, reviewed the evaluation report from the recent visit to Chariho Regional High School and continued the school’s accreditation in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and removed the school from probation for the Standards on Curriculum and Community Resources for Learning.

The Commission was impressed with many of the programs and services at Chariho Regional High School, citing the school’s particular strengths related to the Standards for Accreditation on Mission and Expectations for Student Learning and Leadership and Organization. Specifically, the Commission wishes to commend the following:

- the broad commitment of the entire staff to the school’s mission and expectations for student learning
- the strong and effective role played by the diverse school improvement team in developing the mission and expectations for student learning
- the strong and successful commitment to social and civic values in the mission and expectations that have influenced the school climate
- the school committee’s strong support of the mission and expectations for student learning
- the faithful use of the mission statement to guide the development of new programs, policies, procedures, and opportunities for student learning
- the principal’s leadership and focus on student learning
- the positive and caring school climate
- the positive, caring, and inspiring leadership role assumed by the school improvement team

The Commission was also pleased to learn of:

- the provision and effective use of common planning time
- the extensive professional development opportunities focused on curriculum
- the Career and Technical Center for the effective integration of marketable skills and the college curriculum
- the effectiveness of the PLATO lab in enhancing instructional practice
- the revised and improved teacher evaluation process for its perceived ability to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs
- the newly developed electronic portfolio system as one of the assessment methods used to determine whether the level of student performance meets graduation standards
- the development of school-wide rubrics as essential assessment instruments
- the high level and effectiveness of collaboration and communication between student support services and other professional staff
- the innovative programs available across all areas of student support services to meet the individual needs of all students, including but not limited to, SST, RYSE/ALP, and the hub
- the degree of integration of library/information services and materials into curriculum and instruction
- the active engagement of parents and families as partners in the school community
- the positive, creative, and persevering attitude of staff, students, and administrators in adjusting to facility and maintenance limitations
- the long-term planning and initiatives in place to improve facilities, technology, and equipment pending the receipt of sufficient funding support

Nevertheless, the Commission expressed continued concern regarding the facility. Concerns include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the crowding in the corridors during passing time
- the small area allocated to the guidance department and the lack of sufficient conference space for guidance
- the lack of maintenance storage areas
- the lack of audio-visual storage areas
- the problems with the well water at the Career and Technical Center
- the uneven performance of the HVAC system
- the presence of leaky pipes in various locales in the facility
- the lack of privacy in the nurse’s area
- the outdated kitchen facilities in the Chariho cafeteria and in the Career and Technical Center
- the lack of sufficient availability of computer labs for whole class use or for individual student use in classrooms or in the library/media center
- the lack of adequate parking
- the lack of a regularly funded program for building maintenance and upgrades
- the under-manning of maintenance and custodial staffs
- the lack of a unified keying system that has the potential to impact safety and security
- the failure to provide sufficient audio-visual equipment
- the failure to fund the five-year plan for replacement of equipment
- the failure to provide a dependable source of revenue for maintaining the aging building, replacing maintenance equipment and providing maintenance staff to care for the physical plant
- inadequate library space

Given these concerns, the Commission voted to place the school on warning for the Standard on Community Resources for Learning.
The Commission requests that school officials submit a Special Progress Report by August 1, 2006 indicating how the following recommendations have been addressed:

- resolve immediately all existing and potential safety problems including:
  - leaking pipes
  - concerns regarding well water at the Career and Technical Center
  - the uneven performance of the heating system
  - the lack of a unified keying system to ensure safety and security

- describe the plan to ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to provide:
  - sufficient custodian and maintenance personnel
  - sufficient audio-visual and maintenance equipment and a schedule for its timely replacement
  - technological support including both adequate technology equipment and provision to support its maintenance and currency for the regular maintenance and upgrades to the school plant
  - funding for the five-year plan for replacement of equipment

- describe the plan and timeline to resolve the remaining facility/space limitations:
  - the limited space allocated to guidance and for guidance conferencing,
  - the lack of sufficient storage areas for maintenance and audio visual equipment,
  - the lack of privacy in the nurse’s area,
  - the overcrowding in corridors during passing times,
  - the lack of adequate parking, and
  - the outdated kitchen facilities in both the Chariho cafeteria and in the Career and Technical Center
  - the inadequate library space

The Commission will monitor closely the school’s actions to fully resolve every cited facilities need as identified above. Failure to take steps on each concern will place the school at risk of adverse action by the Commission.

The Special Progress Report should also provide response to the following highlighted recommendations:

- ensure that all departments have identified the expectations for student learning for which they have assumed responsibility
- describe the plan to ensure effective curricular articulation with sending schools
- describe the plan to provide opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection
- increase the use of authentic assessments on a school-wide basis consistent with the mission and expectations for student learning
- describe the plan to improve the follow-up communication between involved faculty members and support staff members concerning support services interventions

Consistent with Commission policies, the school’s warning status will not be removed until the school can demonstrate that it has satisfactorily completed these and other evaluation report recommendations related to the cited Standards areas of concern.
All accredited schools must submit a required Two-Year Progress Report, which in the case of Chariho Regional High School is due on October 1, 2007. In that report school officials should indicate the status of all recommendations in the school’s evaluation report by classifying each in one of five categories: Completed, In Progress, Planned for the Future, Rejected or No Action. In addition, they should provide a brief description of the action that has been taken on each valid recommendation in the evaluation report and include anticipated dates of completion where applicable. Special care should be taken to include appropriate information to justify the Rejected or No Action status of any recommendation.

The Two-Year Progress Report should also provide detailed explanations regarding the manner in which each of the following highlighted recommendations has been addressed:

- describe efforts to develop a common vocabulary and community-wide understanding of the mission and expectations for student learning
- develop a procedure that includes the use of student assessment data for the regular review of the mission and expectations for student learning
- ensure that all curriculum documents are aligned with the expectations for student learning articulated in the mission so that all student have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations
- provide examples of the expansion of opportunities for inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking and the application of knowledge in curriculum at all academic levels
- provide examples of increases in the personalization of instruction and the engagement of students as active learners across all curriculum areas
- expand formal strategies for teachers to solicit feedback from parents and students
- describe the progress in advancing the adoption of the school’s electronic portfolio assessment through grade twelve
- ensure the consistent use of school-wide rubrics to assess the level of achievement by students of the academic expectations for learning
- ensure that the prerequisite structure for access to more demanding courses is consistent with high expectations and with meeting full potential for all students

The Commission congratulates the school administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the accreditation program: the self-study and the evaluation visit. The next step will be the follow-up process during which the school will implement valid recommendations in the evaluation report. The Commission’s Follow-Up Seminars should help you and your faculty develop a schedule for implementing valid recommendations. In addition, the Commission’s Accreditation Handbook provides information on follow-up procedures.

The school’s warning status will be next reviewed when the Commission considers the Special Progress Report. Consistent with the Commission’s follow-up procedures, the Special Progress Report should be signed by the principal and chair of the Follow-Up Committee and sent to the Commission office in duplicate by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Sincerely,

Pamela Gray-Bennett

PGB/mv

cc: Barry J. Ricci, Superintendent, Chariho School District
Stephanie Brown, Chair, Chariho School Committee
Martin Gray, Chair, Commission on Public Secondary Schools