

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOCUSED VISITING COMMITTEE

Each year, member vocational technical superintendents and directors are asked to nominate competent staff members for service on visiting committees. Invitations to serve on a visiting committee are mailed directly from the Commission office to the superintendent/principal/director where the staff member is employed with the request that the invitation be forwarded to the selected staff member.

Accompanying the invitation to serve is a questionnaire that is to be completed and forwarded to the Commission office. This questionnaire should be returned as soon as possible.

The purpose of an on-site visit is to evaluate the school as an institution in terms of the **Standards of Membership** established by the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The visiting committee has a responsibility to ensure that the school receives the kind of educational audit which will

1. Identify areas requiring strengthening or improvement as the institution, through the constructive action of its staff and faculty, engages in the process of continuous self-improvement during the remainder of the decennial period.
2. Serve as a sound basis for a recommendation to the Commission for continued accreditation.
3. Provide further validity for the evaluation and accreditation process.

If an on-site visit serves the above purposes, the school should benefit from a clarification of its objectives, a realistic self-examination of its success in attaining them, and a stimulation to continue to explore ways by which it might increase its effectiveness.

BEFORE THE VISIT

In addition to an invitation to serve on the visiting committee, each evaluator receives from the Commission office a second communication identifying the evaluator's responsibilities, as well as letters from the visiting committee chair and the host school's superintendent/principal/director outlining details of the 2½-day visit. The host school will provide information concerning travel directions, lodging, and meal arrangements. The visiting committee chair will forward to each committee member a schedule for the 2½-day visit. The Commission office provides these **Instructions for Focused Visiting Committee** and a letter outlining specific duties. When the membership of the visiting committee has been established, it is the responsibility of the superintendent/principal/director to contact the chair of the visiting committee to discuss arrangements for the visit (housing, meals, plans and the particulars of the initial meeting with school personnel, scheduled, etc.). Arrangements for the housekeeping aspects of the on-site visit are the responsibility of the host school, but the details depend upon the receipt of appropriate information and direction from the visiting committee chair.

Experience has shown that it is preferable to have the committee housed in one place and in private rooms. The host school will have arranged for a suitable work/meeting room for the committee in the same place that it is housed. The accommodations for committee meetings

should be private, for the visiting committee only, and should contain materials previously identified by the visiting committee chair. The institution will also have available on campus a work/meeting room with copies of current class schedules, staff directories, bulletins, and other institutional publications that may be of interest to the visiting committee members.

DURING THE VISIT

Throughout the visit, each visiting committee member must keep in mind that the role of the visiting committee member is that of a colleague and friendly consultant. It is important to identify problems if they are found. It is equally important that the specific method which must be used to solve identified problems be left to the institution to develop and implement. Please remember that what has worked in your school may not work in this institution. Leave it to the creativity and genius of the local school to find solutions to identified problems.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND CONFERENCES

In the course of the visit, the members of the visiting committee should seek opportunities to talk with representatives of the faculty, students, and administration.

It should be noted that the recommendation of the visiting committee to the Commission is confidential; it must not be divulged to staff members of the host institution and is to be submitted separately by the chair for Commission review.

WRAP-UP SESSION: HOST STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION

Before leaving the school, the visiting committee chair will give the staff and administration and board of governance an oral preview of the committee's findings. This meeting is traditionally the most difficult and requires great tact and diplomacy, yet it is one of the most important aspects of the on-site evaluation.

This session cannot be a courtesy call; it truly must be a meeting with an agenda that identifies overall school strengths and areas of concern as identified by the visiting committee. Visiting committee members may attend. Only the visiting committee chair speaks during the wrap-up session.

No indication should be given to the host staff and administration as to the visiting committee recommendation concerning accreditation. The Commission requests that this procedure be followed because it may modify a recommendation by a visiting committee, which could cause considerable embarrassment if this custom of privacy is not strictly observed.

THE REPORT

The visiting committee chair is responsible for developing a report for the Commission. The visiting committee chair will share with the superintendent/principal/director of the host institution a draft of the evaluation report and request that it be reviewed for factual accuracy. Upon receipt of a letter confirming factual accuracy, or if the chair agrees to some changes

offered by the superintendent/principal/director of the host school, the report will be printed and eighteen (18) copies will be forwarded to the Commission office. The visiting committee chair will forward a separate single communication to the Director of the Commission with the visiting committee recommendation for accreditation (ballot count) on the basis of options available. The visiting committee chair will ensure that the contents of this communication are kept absolutely confidential and for the eyes of the Commission and its Director.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Association's Board of Trustees reimburses at a set rate the use of a personal automobile in connection with an on-site accreditation visit.

Out-of-pocket expenditures should be entered on the expense voucher provided and given to the visiting committee chair prior to leaving the host school. The visiting committee chair will review with the committee reimbursement procedures to include the recording of individual expenses - transportation, meals and lodging.