



BLUE KNIGHTS

# Southington High School

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**Principal**

Martin J. Semmel, Ed.D.

**Assistant Principals**

Andrew S. Bayer

Helen A. Crowley

David S. Germano

Brian R. Stranieri

March 1, 2011

Dear Parents/Guardians/Students:

Many of you are aware that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) made its decennial visit to Southington High School in May, 2010. On its website, NEASC describes itself as an institution that:

provides accreditation services for more than 2000 public and private institutions in the six state region - Pre-K through university. Emanating from high quality standards, NEASC accreditation uses self-reflection, peer review and best practices as integral components of its assessment process and monitors the follow-up endeavors leading to continuous school/program improvement. NEASC consists of six Commissions, each of which sets the standards for a particular segment of the educational community.

NEASC presented its final report to Southington High School and the Southington district in July, 2010. While Southington High School kept its full accreditation status the report contains 62 recommendations that must be addressed by Southington High School and the Southington school district over the next one to two years. You may find the full NEASC report on our website under "NEASC Update". Four of the 62 recommendations focus on our current grouping practice at SHS. The most significant of the four reads:

Review and revise student grouping practices to reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.

Currently, Southington High School uses a grouping practice that includes four levels of instruction. In order to take advantage of best practices and comply with NEASC, Southington High School in coordination with the Southington school district will be redesigning and redefining our grouping practices so that each of the three new levels will prepare students for post-secondary instruction. The first level is likely to be considered a post-secondary preparation program designed to prepare students for post-secondary programs and two-year colleges. The second level is likely to be developed to prepare students for four-year colleges while the third level is likely to be developed as an Honors/Advanced Placement level. Students

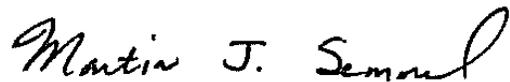
would have the flexibility to move between levels throughout their four years at Southington High School. In fact, we encourage all students to take at least one Advanced Placement course prior to graduation. **The change in our leveling system will occur for the 2012-2013 school year and therefore will not impact any programming for next year.** This will provide us with the time necessary to make smart decisions throughout the process.

In order to ensure that the new grouping practice will be successful for all students, I am forming a steering committee comprised of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members. This committee will be responsible for gathering input from all of our constituents and providing direction and guidance to the administrative team.

I am excited about this needed change since it will provide access to educational opportunities for all our students. These educational opportunities will provide all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in a post-secondary program. The new leveling system, consisting of three levels, will continue to prepare students for competitive four year colleges as well as provide an Honors/Advanced Placement program.

I will begin work with my steering committee this March. We will communicate with parents and students throughout the change process to help improve the overall result. If you have any concerns, comments, or suggestions please feel free to call me at 860-628-3232 or email me at [msemmel@southingtonschools.org](mailto:msemmel@southingtonschools.org). I would be happy to include your ideas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin J. Semmel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M".

Martin J. Semmel, Ed.D.  
Principal