

WHAT IS

PATHWAYS

TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?

An MSA Accreditation Protocol
for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12
Organizations



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WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT?

The activity now known as accreditation is traceable to the guild orientation of the medieval academic communities. The word “accreditation” is derived from middle French, old Italian usage. The first meaning of its root term is “trustworthiness.” Since the early 1900s, accreditation has had a major impact on the field of American education. Accreditation responds to the public’s demands for improved quality and greater accountability for institutions serving society’s needs. Accreditation agencies enjoy a unique “public trust” role in the United States. Accredited schools can be trusted by the public to be what they claim they are and to do what they claim to do. Whatever an accredited school says about itself has both the sanction and the confidence of the profession.

Accreditation encourages and facilitates school improvement.....

- Involvement in an ongoing accreditation protocol fosters excellence and ongoing improvement in a school. The question is not if we want a better school, but how we will assure continuous school improvement. Accreditation provides a *systematic* process that requires a school to ask why it exists, to establish a vision of its future, and to determine specific objectives for reaching that vision.
- The *information* gathered through the accreditation protocol serves as a sound basis for school/district improvement, strategic planning, restructuring, and staff development.
- The accreditation process *examines the entire school*—its philosophy and goals, its community, its programs and services, the facilities and financial stability.
- Accreditation provides a way to *manage change* through regular assessment, planning, implementation, and reassessment.
- Accreditation helps schools/districts *establish priorities* for improvement by using thorough needs assessments, rather than faddish approaches to improvement.
- Accreditation requires a school to establish and *implement a 5-year improvement plan* based upon its vision of the future. Desired school-wide results are a part of the perpetual accreditation cycle that includes:
 - School self-assessment that identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement in the current educational program for students.
 - Insight and perspective from the evaluation team.
 - Regular assessment of progress during the intervening years between full self-studies.
- The accreditation process helps to ensure *greater continuity* of student experiences through continuous clarification of the school’s direction.

- Participation in accreditation provides an excellent *growth experience for staff* who participate on visiting teams to evaluate other schools.
- Because accreditation is a regional activity that encourages broader involvement with educators from other states and independent, public, and church-related constituencies, participants learn from the differences and benefit from the resulting *professional networks*.
- The *support of MSA staff* and encouragement of the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation motivates schools to maintain their focus on continuous school improvement.

Accreditation provides a means for public accountability.....

- The accreditation process validates to the public the *integrity of a school's program and student transcripts*.
- The accreditation process assures a school community that the school's *purposes are appropriate* and are being accomplished through a viable educational program.
- The accreditation process *justifies the faith and resources* others place in the school.

Accreditation fosters stakeholder involvement and commitment.....

- Accreditation provides opportunities for *grass roots, broad-based involvement* of stakeholders in charting the direction of the school.
- The accreditation process offers *a mechanism* for constituent groups to play a major role in determining the school's future, helping a school to be all it can be.
- Accreditation involves key people in *creating a vision* of the future, rather than letting the future happen to the school.

Accreditation builds positive public relations.....

- Accreditation provides opportunities to *emphasize the positive* and show how strong and effective the school is.
- Willingly submitting a school to public scrutiny and evaluation builds commitment and a deeper understanding of the school's efforts. It helps staff *to broaden its view of community expectations* and *fosters closer school and community collaboration*.
- The accreditation process provides *articulation and communication opportunities* between school levels and among stakeholder groups.

WHAT IS *PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?*

Pathways to School Improvement is a unique accreditation process that combines comprehensive data-driven decision-making with strategic planning as vehicles for organizational growth and improvement in student performance. The protocol, developed by the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation (CIWA) of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, provides linkages among various planning and school improvement efforts.

Pathways is intended for use by schools seeking institution-wide accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA). *Pathways* was written for candidate schools/districts preparing for initial accreditation as well as for schools/districts entering reaccreditation activities. The protocol can be used with single site PK-12 institutions as well as multiple site school districts.

Pathways to School Improvement differs from other accreditation formats used by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. *Pathways* focuses on four areas considered to be necessary for effective school improvement. These include:

- **data-driven decision-making**
- **strategic planning**
- **focus on content, performance, and opportunity to learn standards**
- **measurable student performance and organizational improvement objectives.**

Pathways is based on the notion that all of the above activities are necessary requirements to improving student performance and to promoting organizational, curriculum, and instructional change. The *Pathways* protocol seeks to show the importance of clearly identifying desired student and organizational performance outcomes and defining multiple ways of assessing those outcomes. *Pathways* also aims to demonstrate the critical role that inputs such as curriculum, instruction, school culture, facilities, and student services play in creating the conditions necessary to promote improved student achievement and organizational improvement.

In *Pathways*, there are four primary determinants of school/district quality and growth. The first primary determinant is meeting Middle States accreditation standards. All schools, regardless of the protocol used, must meet the twelve MSA accreditation standards.

The second primary determinant is the school's/district's ability to demonstrate and utilize a comprehensive Data Gathering process to analyze strengths and areas for improvement. The Data Gathering process examines four data sources:

- A.) Adherence to the twelve *Middle States accreditation standards* provides assurance that the conditions are in place to give students an opportunity to learn and to allow school improvement efforts to succeed.
- B.) An effective educational program for a district or school consists of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs and solid instructional pedagogy.

The school or district examines how well it designs and implements *curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes* that stimulate student learning at all levels for all abilities.

- C.) An evaluation of the both *the content of the educational program* along with the actual *student performance results*—is an important determinant of the quality of the school or district’s efforts. This section of the self-study asks the school/district to evaluate the quality of the educational experiences provided with regard to content area standards.
- D.) An *external scan* of factors outside of the school community helps the school/district to predict, anticipate, and take into consideration social, demographic, political, economic, educational, and technological changes that could impact upon the future of the school/district.

The third primary determinant of school/district strength and growth is the design and implementation of an ongoing and dynamic planning process. The planning process provides a systematic way to develop, update, and monitor school improvement plans. And, it allows diverse constituent groups to participate in charting the future of the school.

The fourth primary determinant of school/district strength and growth is the development of five-year school improvement plans. *Pathways* requires the school/district to establish objectives for improving student performance and for fostering organizational improvement. These objectives are grounded in a visionary mission/philosophy and a set of ethical beliefs that describe a vision of a preferred future for the school/district. Therefore, *Pathways* is a future-oriented and visionary process.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE *PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT* PROTOCOL

There are nine components to the *Pathways* protocol, completed in four phases.

PHASE 1

Component 1: A School/District/Community Profile (page 21 of this booklet)

In this section, the school/district develops a description of the current characteristics of the school, community, and students. Typically, the Profile is written as a narrative that is supported by numerical, achievement, and trend data and should assist in understanding the context within which school improvement activities occur. The profile includes historical information about the community and outlines expectations that the community has for its students.

Component 2: Demonstrated Adherence to Middle States Accreditation Standards (pages 21-24 of this booklet)

This component includes a comprehensive assessment of twelve quality standards that address the accreditation criteria of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. These quality standards are:

Philosophy/Mission/Beliefs and/or Objectives
Governance and Leadership
Organizational Design and Staff
Educational Programs
Learning Media Services and Technology
Student Services
Student Life and Student Activities
Facilities
Health and Safety
Finance
Assessment of Student Learning
Planning

The school/district conducts an internal scan of how well it meets each of these twelve standards that are considered to be essential to any quality school. This is an important step in identifying strengths and weaknesses that will later be addressed in school improvement plans.

Component 3: Review of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Processes in the Content Areas (pages 25-26 of this booklet)

Component 4: Assessment of Student Performance and Program Quality Relative to Content Standards (page 27 of this booklet)

Schools are educational institutions and thus, considerable attention needs to be given to the quality of curriculum programs as well as the effectiveness of instructional pedagogy in ensuring student success. Thus, the next step in the *Pathways to School Improvement* protocol is to examine the content of the curriculum in relation to two areas: a.) the level of student competency in meeting content standards and b.) the quality of educational experiences provided to enable students to meet these content standards. This review provides a critical analysis of the

areas in which the school/district will want to develop student performance and organizational improvement objectives along with accompanying action plans.

This section of the *Pathways* protocol offers flexibility to the school/district. A school or district may elect to review its curricular program based on state or national content standards. Some public school districts may have their own set of comprehensive content standards that could be used. Use of *Pathways to School Improvement* enables schools and districts to pursue local initiatives and state mandates while at the same time acquire accredited status with Middle States Association. *Pathways* is a strategically designed process aimed at integrating school improvement and accreditation processes into a single seamless activity, thus making better use of time and resources.

Component 5: An External Scan of Demographic, Social, Political, Economic, Educational and Technological Factors (page 28 of this booklet)

A thorough exploration of the external factors that will likely face a school community in the future is a critical part of the Data Gathering Phase of *Pathways*. External scanning is based on the realization that there will likely be external factors impacting the school over which it has limited control. However, this does not mean that the external changes should control the school. Rather, the visionary Planning Team will give consideration to ways to manage such changes in effective and fruitful ways. The external scan helps to prevent surprises that might debilitate the school and its effectiveness.

It is at this point in the *Pathways* process that the school/district begins to shift its attention from data gathering to data-driven decision making and enters the second Phase of the protocol.

PHASE 2

Component 6: A Planning Process

The school/district's planning process should ensure that the institution has the capacity, the will, and the systems in place to implement its action plans. The planning process typically includes a Data Gathering Steering Committee (DGSC) responsible for organizing all Phase 1 activities. As the school enters the Planning Phase, the process calls for a Planning Team responsible for monitoring the plan, procedures for communicating planning activities to the school community and obtaining their ongoing input into the plan, provision for annual reviews of the plan, and Action Plan Implementation Teams responsible for implementing the plans. Typically, an Internal Coordinator(s) helps to guide the school/district through both the Data Gathering and Planning processes. Underlying the entire school improvement activity is the need for a viable, dynamic, and systematic planning and review process. Because of the flexibility Middle States affords schools/districts in aligning a process that meets their needs, a description of this process (its current structure, its future, and its genesis) will be included in this component.

Component 7: A School Improvement Plan (pages 29-35 of this booklet)

The school improvement plan should contain the following items: mission/philosophy, beliefs, three to five measurable objectives for each school site (at least two of which are focused on student performance; all objectives need to be approved by Middle States), and action plans for each objective that detail activities, timelines, individuals/groups responsible, resources provided to accomplish these objectives, and evaluation indicators.

The school improvement plan should chart the direction of the school/district for the next five years. The content of the plan should reflect those areas identified in the Data Gathering Phase as needing improvement.

The linchpin of the school improvement plan is the development of measurable objectives. Middle States recommends that there be three to five objectives for each school site. At least two of these objectives must be related to improving student performance. These objectives are so critical to the success of the school improvement process that the objectives go through a “technical review” and “approval process.”

PHASE 3

Component 8: External Evaluation by Middle States

The external evaluation conducted by MSA examines the work conducted by the school/district during the Data Gathering and Planning Phases. The Visiting Team evaluates the twelve quality standards for accreditation and makes a judgment as to whether the institution meets these standards. Curriculum programs are reviewed and team members observe in classrooms to see instruction in action. Finally, the planning process used and the content of the school improvement plan are evaluated. A comprehensive written report is developed and provided to the school/district as a result of the evaluation and an accreditation recommendation is forward to the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation.

Component 9: Continuous Review and Accreditation Maintenance

There are specific requirements for the ongoing review of the school improvement plans that are necessary to maintain accreditation. These include both activities conducted by the school or district as well as onsite reviews by Middle States representatives.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT *PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT* AND INSTITUTION-WIDE ACCREDITATION

To what does a school commit when it selects the *Pathways to School Improvement* protocol?

By choosing *Pathways* as its accreditation protocol, a school/district makes several commitments.

- 1.) It commits to focusing on the end results--increased student performance and organizational improvement--as primary priorities for improvement efforts.
- 2.) It commits to organizing improvement efforts as school-wide or district-wide initiatives.
- 3.) It commits to operating from a vision of where it wants and/or needs to go with the mission/philosophy, beliefs, and measurable objectives serving as a unifying force for change.
- 4.) It commits to basing decisions and plans on comprehensive and multiple data sources.
- 5.) It commits to including a varied spectrum of stakeholders in the process of defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing action plans developed by these stakeholders.
- 6.) It commits to a process in which progress will be reviewed continuously.
- 7.) It agrees to participate in a peer review and external validation process by accepting outside visitors.

All schools/districts are asked to sign a Commitment Form when they select the *Pathways to School Improvement* protocol. In signing this form, representatives of the governing board, the district/overall school organization, and the head of each school site endorse the above seven commitments, demonstrating that all levels of the organization expect to work together toward the implementation of the *Pathways to School Improvement* plans.

What term of accreditation is granted to schools engaged in the *Pathways to School Improvement* protocol?

The accreditation term for schools using the *Pathways* protocol is five years. The school may, however, exercise the option to extend the accreditation term for an additional five years if specific conditions are met.

To receive initial five year accreditation: To earn the initial five-year accreditation term, the school completes a comprehensive self-analysis of MSA accreditation standards, external factors, curriculum, instruction, and assessment indicators, and an analysis of the quality of educational experiences and student performance in relation to content standards. Based on this data, the school develops a school improvement plan and puts an ongoing planning process into place. If the MSA Visiting Team verifies that the school meets the standards, has utilized an effective data-gathering and data analysis process, has developed appropriate objectives, and has a viable plan to achieve the objectives, the school is granted accreditation for an initial five years. As a part of accreditation maintenance requirements, the school/district will host an MSA representative at the midpoint of the five year accreditation term for a one-day, onsite visit; the purpose of this visit is to assess progress made on the school improvement plan.

To extend accreditation for an additional five years: A school or district can elect to seek extension of the accreditation term for an additional five years by conducting two activities. The first activity is a “thorough renewal” of the school improvement plan. This would include the reassessment of the mission/philosophy and beliefs and the redevelopment of three to five measurable objectives per school site (at least 2 of which must be focused on student performance areas). Five-year action plans should be developed to outline how the school/district will address the objectives.

The second activity is to host an MSA Mini-Team (generally a 3-person team) to assess the progress on the first five-year objectives and to review the new school improvement plan. If the Visiting Team verifies the school’s/district’s growth and commitment, then accreditation may be granted for an additional five years. Again, as a part of accreditation maintenance requirements, the school/district will host an MSA representative at the midpoint of the second five year accreditation term for a one-day, onsite visit.

If the school/district seeks to extend its accreditation for an additional five years, must the comprehensive self-study (Middle States accreditation standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment indicators, and student performance and quality of educational experiences relative to content standards) be completed?

No, the comprehensive self-study is designed to be completed once every ten years. Therefore, if the school/district seeks an extension, the focus should be on the renewal and revitalization of the school improvement plan.

Can the school/district extend its term of accreditation beyond ten years?

No. The accreditation term for *Pathways* is five years with the option for one and only one extension for an additional five years.

What might be the reasons that a school/district would not seek to extend accreditation for an additional five years?

A school/district might want to engage in the Data Gathering Phase of *Pathways* more frequently than every ten years and receive a more comprehensive Visiting Team evaluation. A school/district may also wish to limit its accreditation to a single five year term for some of the following reasons:

- *Major changes in state mandates prompting the need for data analysis*
- *Large turnover in staff and administration*
- *Perceived need to make major curriculum changes*
- *As an antecedent to a major facilities update or building program*
- *Mission/Philosophy change*
- *Major demographic, economic, or sociopolitical changes*

It is expected that Middle States staff will play a role in providing counsel to schools and districts to determine whether seeking an extension is in their best interests.

How much flexibility does the school have in choosing its measurable objectives?

The school/district has a great deal of flexibility in determining what areas require the development of objectives and the sustained attention of the school community. The following guidelines, however, should be kept in mind.

- At least two of the objectives at each school site must focus on student performance.
- Objectives must be measurable.
- The Visiting Team will be charged with ensuring that the school/district has made an appropriate and full response to the major areas identified in the self-analysis of accreditation standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment indicators, and student performance and quality of educational experiences relative to content standards.
- There should be broad stakeholder support for the selected objectives.
- The full complement of objectives should have impact on the entire school/district. While individual objectives might deal with sub-populations of the school (e.g. middle school, special needs students), taken together, the objectives should address significant school-wide/district-wide needs.

A wise school/district will use the Data Gathering Phase as an essential source of its objectives. The accreditation process is also an effective way to respond to state or local mandates.

What are the typical costs of the *Pathways to School Improvement* process?

The following costs are estimates for a single site PK-12 school or a small multiple-site school district. As the size and complexity of the school or district increases, the larger the Visiting Team that is needed to conduct a thorough evaluation. (**Schools engaged in a complex PK-12 process or a large multi-site evaluation should consult with the Director of the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation for clarification of costs.)

The cost of any evaluation process is a combination of several factors. The first factor is staff and administrative time required to engage in a thoughtful, comprehensive Data Gathering and Planning process. Because schools will manage these “costs” in a wide variety of ways, no attempt has been made to estimate the amount of resources required for this segment of the process.

The second factor includes annual dues, one-time fees, and the cost of hosting a Visiting Team. Visiting Team costs include team accommodations, meals, and travel. Visiting Team members are volunteers and are not paid for the time they contribute to serve on evaluation teams.

Estimated Annual Dues, Fees, and Visiting Team Costs:

TYPE OF COST	FREQUENCY	APPROXIMATE AMOUNT
Annual dues (These vary depending upon the enrollment of the school and the number of sites served.)	Annual; billing occurs in July of each year	\$ 700 to \$1500** **for a single site school
Evaluation preparation / Accreditation fee	Once every five years when school receives a Visiting Team. Includes self-study materials and workshops needed.	\$300
Previsit by the Team Chair *This visit seldom requires an overnight stay and usually covers just transportation costs.	Once every five years when school is preparing to receive a Visiting Team.	\$300
Mid-Point Review *This visit seldom requires an overnight stay and usually covers just transportation costs.	Takes place at the mid-point (2 ½ years) of each five year term	\$300

<p>Visiting Team costs *Will vary based on local costs of hotel, meals, transportation, and desired characteristics of team members (e.g. urban experience, boarding school). Estimate based on a team of ten (10) members for a three-day visit. The estimate is based on \$1000 per evaluator which is likely a high-end estimate.</p>	<p>Once every ten years (if the school/district elects to extend accreditation for an additional five years)</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>
<p>Mini-Visit Team costs *Will vary based on local costs of hotel, meals, transportation, and desired characteristics of team members (e.g. urban experience, boarding school). Estimate based on a team of three (3) members for a three-day visit. The estimate is based on \$1000 per evaluator which is likely a high-end estimate.</p>	<p>Once every ten years (if the school/district elects to extend accreditation for an additional five years)</p>	<p>\$3000</p>
<p>Secretarial costs *Sometimes, the team chair will require secretarial services to compile the Visiting Team report.</p>	<p>Once every five years when the school is receiving a visiting team</p>	<p>\$250 maximum allowable amount</p>

Estimated Maximum Cost

<p>During the year of the Full Team Visit (includes annual dues)</p>	<p>\$12,350</p>
<p>During the year of the Mid-Point Review (includes annual dues)</p>	<p>\$ 1,800</p>
<p>During the year of the Mini-Team Visit (includes annual dues)</p>	<p>\$ 5,350</p>
<p>In other years (includes annual dues)</p>	<p>\$700 to 1,500</p>

Frequently, the costs listed in the chart above will be much lower. Few chairs charge for secretarial services, teams are often smaller than designated, or team members may live closer to the school. The school/district should, however be prepared to pay these amounts and, therefore, should budget accordingly. The summary above shows that total costs are spread across different budget years.

In addition to these costs, some schools/district hire an external facilitator to assist in the planning process; others utilize district staff to facilitate. Schools might also conduct teacher/student/ parent/community surveys as a part of the Data Gathering Phase. There will also be costs associated with copying and binding the self study and planning document for Visiting Team members and others.

COMPONENTS OF *PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT*

PHASE #1: DATA GATHERING

(NOTE: A Data Gathering Steering Committee guides the work in Components #1 –5.)

Component 1: **School/District/Community Profile**

Component 2: **Adherence to Middle States Accreditation Standards**

- Philosophy/Mission/Beliefs and/or Objectives
- Governance and Leadership
- Organizational Design and Staff
- Educational Programs
- Learning Media Services and Technology
- Student Services
- Student Life and Student Activities
- Facilities
- Health and Safety
- Finance
- Assessment of Student Learning
- Planning

Component 3: **Review of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Process Indicators in the Content Areas**

<u>Required Areas</u>	<u>Optional Areas</u>
Art	ESL
English/Language Arts	Family and Consumer Science
Foreign Languages	Geography
Health and Physical Education	Religion/Theology
Mathematics	
Music	<i>Others as identified by</i>
Science	<i>the school/district</i>
Social Studies	
Technology/Computer Science	

Component 4: **Assessment of Student Performance and Program Quality
Relative to Content Standards**

<u>Required Areas</u>	<u>Optional Areas</u>
Art	ESL
English/Language Arts	Family and Consumer Science
Foreign Languages	Geography
Health and Physical Education	Religion/Theology
Mathematics	
Music	<i>Others as identified by</i>
Science	<i>the school/district</i>
Science	
Social Studies	
Technology/Computer Science	

Component 5: **External Scan**

- Demographic Factors
- Social Factors
- Political Factors
- Economic Factors
- Educational Factors
- Technological Factors

- Competition Analysis

NOTE: Data Gathering Activities may occur in a different order.

PHASE #2: PLANNING

(NOTE: A Planning Team guides the school through Components #6-9.)

Component 6: **A Planning Process**

- Data Gathering Steering Committee (DGSC)
 - Composition
 - Operation
- Planning Team (PT)
 - Composition
 - Operation
 - Feedback
- Roles of:
 - Governing Body
 - Administration
 - Teachers
 - Internal Coordinator (s)
- Communication and Awareness Activities
- Action Plan Implementation Teams
- Annual Review

Component 7: **A School Improvement Plan**

- Mission/Philosophy
- Beliefs
- Measurable Objectives—Three to five objectives per school site (at least two of which are student performance-based) with Technical Review
- Action Plans (Five-year plans) for each Objective

PHASE #3: EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Component 8: **External Evaluation by a Middle States Visiting Team**

PHASE #4: CONTINUOUS REVIEW

Component 9: **Accreditation Maintenance**

- Annual Reviews by the District
- Mid-Point Review Visit by Middle States

FLOWCHART OF EVENTS IN THE *Pathways to School Improvement* PROCESS

The following flowchart of events in the *Pathways to School Improvement* process is designed for illustration purposes only. The events are listed in a linear fashion to give schools a sense of a logical order in which activities might proceed. Schools may, however, move through the events in a different order depending on their stage of development. Section numbers refer to the complete *Pathways to School Improvement—A Guide for Schools and Districts*; this is a 250+ guide given to schools/districts who have elected to use the protocol.

The components in *Pathways* are organized in four Phases (Data Gathering, Planning, External Evaluation, Continuous Review and Accreditation Maintenance) with at least 33 steps listed below.

Steps Prior to Beginning the Pathways to School Improvement Protocol

Prior to the school/district beginning the *Pathways to School Improvement* protocol, the following events should take place.

Preliminary Step #1: School/district officials attend a spring regional seminar on accreditation options, a *Pathways to School Improvement* awareness session, and/or Middle States staff conducts an orientation at the school site.

Preliminary Step #2: Board discusses accreditation options. School/district discusses options.

Preliminary Step #3: Accreditation options presented to the faculty.

Preliminary Step #4: School/Governing Body/District or System Head signs Commitment Form indicating that *Pathways* has been selected.

Preliminary Step #5: Middle States sends a formal letter of acceptance into the *Pathways to School Improvement* process.

Preliminary Step #6: Roles of administration, governing body and teachers determined. Job descriptions developed for data gathering steering committee, internal coordinators, planning team, and action plan implementation teams.

Preliminary Step #7: School/district sends a list of staff members to Middle States to participate in *Pathways to School Improvement* team visits to other schools. This can be done via the nomination forms sent to the school by MSA.

Steps in the Pathways to School Improvement Protocol

- Step #1:** The school/district identifies and appoints Internal Coordinator(s).
- Step #2:** The school/district identifies and appoints Data Gathering Steering Committee (DGSC).

PHASE #1: DATA GATHERING

- Step 3:** DGSC decides how Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 will be completed to ensure involvement and participation of critical stakeholder groups. DGSC sets timeline for data gathering activities and determines how it will operate as an ad hoc committee.
- Step 4:** School/district develops School/District/Community Profile (Section 4).
- Step 5:** Schools complete Section 5 to demonstrate Adherence to Middle States Accreditation Standards.
- Step 6:** School/district completes Section 6 on the Assessment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Processes.
- Step 7:** School/district completes Assessment of Student Performance and Program Quality Relative to Content Area Standards (Section 7).
- Step 8:** School/district conducts an External Scan (Section 8).
- Step 9:** School/district determines whether an External Facilitator will be used for the Planning Team.

PHASE #2: PLANNING

- Step 10:** A broad-based, representative group of stakeholders called the Planning Team is appointed. The Planning Team determines ground rules for how it will operate.
- Step 11:** Information from the Data Gathering Phase is presented to the Planning Team as the basis to begin its work. The Planning Team develops a School Improvement Plan that includes mission/philosophy, beliefs, and measurable objectives. Planning Team conducts self-analysis of how well the Planning Team is operating.
- Step 12:** Internal Coordinators submit objectives to MSA staff for Technical Review.

- Step 13:** Ongoing communications and awareness activities take place.
- Step 14:** School/district determine desired dates for the team visit. MSA approves team visit dates, in writing.
- Step 15:** The Planning Team ensures school-wide consensus on the mission/philosophy, beliefs, objectives, and action plans.
- Step 16:** Action Plan Implementation Teams appointed and begin work on the development of the action plans.
- Step 17:** The Planning Team establishes an ongoing follow-up process to monitor implementation and accomplishment of the action plans through the five-year accreditation period. This includes an annual review process.

PHASE #3: EXTERNAL EVALUATION

- Step 18:** Middle States appoints chair of the Visiting Team. School/district approves or rejects chair of team.
- Step 19:** Internal Coordinators compile materials on the Data Gathering Phase, the Planning Process, and the School Improvement Plan into a Self-Study/Planning Document for the Visiting Team.
- Step 20:** Visiting Team Chair conducts previsit to cooperatively plan arrangements and schedules for the team visit.
- Step 21:** Middle States staff appoints team members, in cooperation with the school/district.
- Step 22:** Final team roster sent to school. School has the right to raise concerns about the appointment of any member of the team.
- Step 23:** School/district sends final Self-study and Planning Document to all team members **and** the Middle States office.
- Step 24:** Team visit takes place. Chair gives an oral report at the end of the visit.
- Step 25:** Team Chair sends a draft copy of the team report to the school/district to correct for “errors of fact.” School/district returns draft to the Chair within ten days. This draft is not for distribution to the public.
- Step 26:** Chair corrects errors of fact and sends draft final report to Middle States office with an electronic version of the document.

- Step 27:** Middle States staff reviews the team report and sends two copies of the final report to the school/district. Staff analyzes the report and recommends accreditation action.
- Step 28:** School/district returns fax response to MSA indicating receipt of the team report.
- Step 29:** Team report is distributed to a wide audience of stakeholders in the school community.
- Step 30:** Middle States takes accreditation action. Schools visited in the fall are acted upon during spring Commission meetings (usually in April). Schools visited in the spring are acted upon during fall Commission meetings (usually in October).

PHASE #4: CONTINUOUS REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE

- Step 31:** School/district conducts (at a minimum) annual reviews. Annual reviews are not submitted to MSA, but records are kept for the Mid-Point Reviewer.
- Step 32:** Middle States contacts the school regarding the appointment of a Mid-Point Reviewer. A mid-point review visit to the school is conducted by someone from the original Visiting Team about 2 and ½ years after the team visit.
- Step 33:** School/district confers with Middle States staff to determine whether to seek a five year extension on the *Pathways* accreditation term.

DATA GATHERING—PHASE #1

Component #1: School/District/Community Profile

The district develops a brief background document that depicts the current characteristics of the school, community, and students. Typically, the Profile is written as a narrative that is supported by numerical, achievement, and trend data and should assist in understanding the context within which school improvement activities occur. The profile includes historical information about the community and outlines expectations that the community has for its students.

The School/District

- History of the school/district and its traditions
- Geographic location
- Summary of academic programs, grouping patterns, and scheduling
- School climate
- Summary of financial data
- Description of student admissions/student and staff recruitment processes
- Staff characteristics and stability
- Opinion inventory results from teachers/staff (optional)

The Students in the School

- Enrollment information: past, present and projected (Exhibit 4A)
- Ethnic/cultural identity of students
- Synopses of student achievement
- Graduation plans of students
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Opinion inventory results from students (optional)

The School Community

- Current demographic, social, political, or economic characteristics of the school and community
- Other schools in the community
- Resources available (library, museums, post-secondary institutions, orchestras, recreation, parks, clubs, parent and community organizations, etc.)
- Key trends or changes occurring in the school community
- Opinion inventory results from parents (optional)

Other Information

- Relationship of the *Pathways to School Improvement* activities to any other planning or school improvement initiatives
- *Pathways to School Improvement* Commitment Form

DATA GATHERING--PHASE #1
Component #2: Middle States Accreditation Standards

The school/district conducts an internal scan of how well it meets each of these twelve standards that are considered to be essential to any quality school. This is an important step in identifying strengths and weaknesses that will later be addressed in school improvement plans.

A Standards Review is to be conducted for each of the twelve accreditation standards according to the directions that follow.

<i>Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives</i>	<i>Educational Programs</i>
<i>Governance and Leadership</i>	<i>Facilities</i>
<i>Organizational Design and Staff</i>	<i>Finance</i>
<i>Learning Media Services and Technology</i>	<i>Student Services</i>
<i>Student Life and Student Activities</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>
<i>Assessment of Student Learning</i>	<i>Planning</i>

DIRECTIONS: For each standard....

- 1.) Indicate the extent to which the standard is being met on a scale of 5 to 1 with 5 being “strongly implemented” and 1 being “not implemented.”
- 2.) Provide any General Comments on the standard. Survey respondents and the school/district may want to use the Comments section to draw attention to a great success, a concern, or an area of interest. The Comments section can also be used to provide additional indicators that show the Standard is met.
- 3.) Clearly identify the school’s/district’s areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- 4.) Identify materials, information, and artifacts that are available to support the assessment of the standard. Include comments wherever possible.
- 5.) Describe how the assessment of the standard was conducted, including how many and what individuals were involved.

EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE 12 MSA STANDARDS:

STUDENT SERVICES

STANDARD: Student Services

The Standard: The school provides services to students that optimize their preparation for learning. Chief among these services are guidance, including academic and personal counseling, and health services. Preventive and emergency health care services are provided and health and safety policies are clear and well-understood. Other services that may be provided include transportation, food service, services for special needs students, and admissions and placement.

Indicators:

Guidance and Counseling Services:

- a.) The school is sensitive to the non-academic needs of students and has in place a process whereby the emotional and social needs of students are addressed.
- b.) Counselors, administrators, teachers, and/or other staff share responsibilities for providing guidance and support to students.
- c.) Counseling services are well organized, are in accord with the school's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives, and are under the leadership of qualified personnel.
- d.) Student data is current, comprehensive, and readily available for use by the staff.
- e.) Follow-up studies for graduates and other former students are carried out, and the resultant data is shared with staff to help in determining the effectiveness of school programs.
- f.) Guidance services include both individual and group counseling activities.
- g.) Career counseling is provided at upper elementary, middle, and secondary levels.
- h.) Guidance services extend into and interact with community services as needed.

Health Services:

- a.) Health services are provided to meet basic health needs and handle medical emergencies.
- b.) An established written policy for faculty members to follow in handling accidents or illnesses is available. Staff and administration are familiar with safety and/or evacuation plans.
- c.) Health records are maintained in good condition.
- d.) Training is available for staff in CPR and first aid.
- e.) The health staff informs the faculty and parents (where appropriate) about serious health or physical needs that may exist in the student body.
- f.) Working relationships with local authorities/health service providers are positive.
- g.) The instructional program includes opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary to meet the present health needs of youth and society.

Transportation Services:

- a.) Transportation needs of students are met and are provided for through prudent oversight.
- b.) Safety concerns for pick-up and drop-off of students are effectively addressed.

Food Services:

- a.) Food services and/or functional, hygienically maintained areas for students to consume their own food are provided.
- b.) Information on nutrition, and, when needed, counseling on the nutritional merits of the food the school serves or the students bring is provided.

Services for Special Needs Students:

- a.) Psychological, social, and psychiatric services are available to students through school- or community-based services.
- b.) Effective procedures are established for identifying and addressing the special needs of students with learning differences.

Admissions and Placement:

- a.) The school has a well-defined, published admissions process with criteria upon which admissions decisions are made.
- b.) Those wishing to enroll in the school are clearly informed of the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives of the school, the nature and extent of educational programs and services available, tuition and fees, and the expectations of students for satisfactory performance.
- c.) The school accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success from the program as appropriate and interpreted by law.

Overall Assessment of the School's/District's Adherence to the Standard on Student Services

5 4 3 2 1

General Comments about Student Services:

List the significant strengths of the school/district in the area of Student Services.

List the significant areas for improvement of the school/district in the area of Student Services.

Identify materials, reports, information, and artifacts that are available to the Visiting Team to support this assessment. (NOTE: These materials do not need to be gathered unless the Visiting Team requests them.)

This assessment was completed by the following method(s):

a.) the compilation of _____ surveys distributed to: (*indicate number in each category*)
 _____ administration _____ faculty _____ students _____ board members
 _____ parents _____ other: _____

b.) a subcommittee comprised of the following individuals:

Committee Member Name	Role in the School Community (e.g. teacher, parent, student, etc.)

c.) Other methods used to determine this assessment:

DATA GATHERING—PHASE #1
Component #3: Assessment of Curriculum, Instruction, and
Assessment Processes

This component requires the school/district to evaluate at least the following *NINE* learning areas.

<i>Art</i>	<i>Computer Science – Technology</i>
<i>English/Language Arts</i>	<i>Foreign Languages</i>
<i>Health and Physical Education</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>
<i>Music</i>	<i>Science</i>
<i>Social Studies</i>	

Schools also have the option of including learning areas in addition to these nine in the self study.

EXAMPLE OF SELECTED CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION and ASSESSMENT
INDICATORS:

Content Area: _____

CURRICULUM INDICATORS (a total of 17 indicators)

INDICATOR 1: **5 4 3 2 1**

The development of the _____ curriculum is based on a thorough assessment of the basic concepts, skills, and knowledge required of all students to fulfill the stated goals of the program.

INDICATOR 2: **5 4 3 2 1**

The _____ curriculum has established priorities, objectives, and goals for all courses and units within the program that are based on clearly defined expectations for all students. The curriculum is designed to ensure the alignment of teaching strategies, learning activities, instructional support, instructional resources, and assessment.

INDICATOR 3: **5 4 3 2 1**

The learning expectations of the _____ curriculum address the diverse learning needs of the students without compromising the essential knowledge and skills students are expected to learn.

INSTRUCTION INDICATORS (a total of 11 indicators)

INDICATOR 18: **5 4 3 2 1**

A variety of teaching strategies and techniques is utilized to meet the needs of individual students in _____.

INDICATOR 19: **5 4 3 2 1**

The scope and pacing of lessons in _____ are appropriate to the students.

INDICATOR 28: **5 4 3 2 1**

Teaching staff is provided with continuing professional growth activities that support the effective fulfillment of _____ program objectives. Support for effective use of research-based instructional practices is provided to teachers.

ASSESSMENT INDICATORS (a total of 3 indicators)

INDICATOR 29: **5 4 3 2 1**

Timely and useful evaluative information and feedback using a variety of methods for assessing learning is provided to students by _____ teachers.

INDICATOR 30: **5 4 3 2 1**

Assessment data on student learning is used to determine the need to intervene on behalf of student learning as well as to measure the presence or absence of achievement in the _____ program.

INDICATOR 31: **5 4 3 2 1**

Student placement in the _____ program is based on a thorough analysis of student abilities and interest as well as staff expectations.

DATA GATHERING—PHASE #1
Component #4: Assessment Of Student Performance And
Program Quality Relative To Content Standards

In this section, the school/district is asked to evaluate student performance and program quality---the *results* of curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities. Today, most state education departments of education have developed content area standards; in addition, some public school districts as well as most of the national curriculum groups have identified desired student outcomes. Schools/districts must address content area standards in at least the following *NINE* required content areas.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Art</i></p> <p><i>English/Language Arts</i></p> <p><i>Health and Physical Education</i></p> <p><i>Music</i></p> <p><i>Social Studies</i></p> | <p><i>Computer Science – Technology</i></p> <p><i>Foreign Languages</i></p> <p><i>Mathematics</i></p> <p><i>Science</i></p> |
|--|---|

SAMPLE OF A NEW YORK LEARNING STANDARD: THE ARTS

DIRECTIONS: Please rate each content standard according to the *quality of educational experiences provided and student performance*. Use the two rating scales provided, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest rating and 1 as the lowest rating.

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

ELEMENTARY: DANCE

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES	LEARNING STANDARD: Students will perform set dance forms in formal and informal contexts and will improvise, create, and perform dances based on their own movement ideas. They will demonstrate an understanding of choreographic principles, processes, and structures and of the roles of various participants in dance productions	STUDENT PERFORMANCE
5 = Highest quality 4 = Good quality 3 = Average quality 2 = Below average quality 1 = No experiences		5 = Exemplary performance 4 = Above average performance 3 = Average performance 2 = Below average performance 1 = Can not perform
5 4 3 2 1	Students identify and demonstrate movement elements and skills (such as bend, twist, slide, skip, hop)	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	Students demonstrate ways of moving in relation to people, objects, and environments in set dance forms.	5 4 3 2 1

DATA GATHERING—PHASE #1

Component #5: External Scan of Demographic, Social, Political, Economic, Educational and Technological Factors and Analysis of Competition

A thorough exploration of the external factors that will likely face a school community in the future is a critical part of the Data Gathering Phase of *Pathways*. External scanning is based on the realization that there will likely be external factors impacting the school over which it has limited control. An example of how the school/district might explore and record each of these external factors follows:

EXTERNAL FACTOR	IMPACT ON OUR SCHOOL/DISTRICT	POSSIBLE RESPONSES OF OUR SCHOOL/DIST.
ECONOMIC: Global leadership in science and technology to increasingly determine economic leadership.	**Employers will want graduates with science and technology skill. **Parents will want their children to have multiple opportunities in science and technology. **Costs of providing science and technology opportunities for students will likely escalate if the school is to keep pace.	**Increase science and technology offerings. **Become a science/technology magnet school. **Establish business partners in these fields. **Do nothing. Wait for this “fad” to pass. **Integrate science and technology emphasis into all subject areas. **Look into distance learning courses in these areas. **Develop a long range technology plan.

Analysis of Competition

COMPETITOR: The Smith Charter Academy

Smith Charter Academy Advantages	Our Advantages
Small class sizes	Lower than average class sizes with an aide in most classrooms; many support services
No federal or state mandates to follow	Rigorous curriculum; strong accountability via state testing program
Can select their own students; sense of elitism	Diverse student body reflective of society
Housed in a converted “brownstone”	Better, more comprehensive facilities such as auditorium, cafeteria, comprehensive library media center
Sense of belonging, being chosen, because of tuition and long waiting list	No tuition
	Lots of technology, up-to-date materials
	All teachers and administrators certified

PHASE #2

CONTENT OF THE *PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT* PLAN

- **Mission**
- **Beliefs**
- **Objectives**
- **Action Plans**

Examples of mission statements:

The mission of the Central School is to produce graduates with unlimited capacity to compete in a superior manner in any challenge they undertake by guaranteeing each individual customized, all-inclusive learning experiences, integrating the unique agricultural, medical, and historical resources of our diverse community.

The mission of the Dayton Public Schools, as the transforming agent of the community, is to guarantee 100% success through a network of independent competing instructional services that actualize the unique potential of each person.

A school's/district's mission should be outcome-based, providing clarity on:

- the school's/district's *audience* (whom it currently serves or should serve in the future),
- its *action* (what it currently does or should do in the future),
- its *aim* (the current purpose for which it exists or what the school's/district's purpose should be in the future) and
- its *identity* (what makes the school/district unique)
- its *means/function* (how, in broad terms, it will do it).

Examples of belief statements:

We believe that:

- *Children are our community's most valuable asset.*
- *Understanding and appreciation of diversity are critical to world peace and harmony.*
- *Risk-taking and a willingness to change are necessary for continuous improvement.*
- *The transmission and creation of social and cultural values is the primary responsibility of education.*
- *Excellence is achievable and always worth the investment.*
- *Shared values and common goals shape and change the culture of healthy organizations.*

A Key Component of the Plan: Measurable Student Performance and Organizational Development Objectives

District-Wide Objectives on Student Performance

Example #1: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, 85% of students in grades K-12 will demonstrate competence with technology as measured by meeting grade level standards on the K-12 School Technology Performance Assessment.

Baseline:	Year:	1999
<u>22%</u>	of grade 2 students meet grade level technology standards	
<u>34%</u>	of grade 5 students meet grade level technology standards	
<u>41%</u>	of grade 7 students meet grade level technology standards	
<u>56%</u>	of grade 9 students meet grade level technology standards	
<u>66%</u>	of grade 10 students meet grade level technology standards	
<u>68%</u>	of grade 12 students meet grade level technology standards	

Example #2: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, students will demonstrate an increase in responsibility to the K-12 School community as measured by the following:

- a.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating accomplished use of conflict resolution at the Lower School identified by 4th grade scores on the Lower School Conflict Resolution Rubric.
- b.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating accomplished service within the community at the Middle School identified by 8th grade scores on the Middle School Service Rubric.
- c.) a 20% increase in the number of seniors demonstrating accomplished leadership identified by the Leadership Rubric.
- d.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating integrity and respect toward others in personal interactions identified by the K-12 School Personal Interactions Rubric.

Baseline: Spring 1999

- a.) 48% of 4th graders are “Accomplished” according to the Lower School Conflict Resolution Rubric
- b.) 34% of 8th graders are “Accomplished” according to the Service Rubric
- c.) 21% of seniors are “Accomplished” according to the Leadership Rubric
- d.) 56% of Lower School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric
- e.) 64% of Middle School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric

- f.) 84% of Upper School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric.

District-Wide Objectives on Organizational Growth

Example #3: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, Mountaintop Day School will improve fund-raising activities as measured by:

- a.) increasing the annual giving amount to \$100,000 per year.
- b.) increasing the number of gifts by 100%
- c.) increasing the number of successful grants achieved to 10 per year
- d.) increasing the amount of grant funding to \$40,000 per year.

Baseline: 1999

<u>\$ 23, 345</u>	annual gift amount
<u>78</u>	number of gifts
<u>2</u>	number of successful grants achieved
<u>\$5500</u>	amount of grant funding received

Example #4: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, Happy Valley School District will improve public relations efforts as measured by:

- a.) issuing a newsletter 10 times a year to all homes in the community
- b.) increasing the size of the district web page by 200%
- c.) increasing the number of presentations made by district staff to community groups by 100%
- d.) increasing attendance at every school’s PTA meetings by 50%

Baseline: 1999

<u>2</u>	newsletters issued a year
<u>42%</u>	of homes in community receive district newsletter
<u>5 K</u>	size of current district website
<u>16</u>	average parent attendance at Happy Valley High School
<u>40</u>	average parent attendance at Happy Valley Middle School
<u>65</u>	average parent attendance at Happy Valley Elementary School

ACTION PLAN CRITERIA

Comprehensiveness and Logic of the Action Plan Steps/Strategies

- Do the steps/strategies in the action plan make sense? Are they in a logical order?
- Are there enough steps/strategies in the action plan to ensure that the objective will be achieved?
- Have any major steps been left out? Are there any key areas that need to be added to ensure that the objective is achieved?
- Do the action plan steps address many aspects of the school operations and the school population, rather than being narrowly focused on a particular organizational issue or a particular group of students?

Relationship to the Middle States Accreditation Standards and Self-Study Findings

- Have areas identified as needing improvement in the Middle States Standards review and throughout the self-study been effectively addressed in the action plan?

Systems to Ensure the Action Plan Is Implemented

- Have resources been thoroughly addressed?
- Have persons/groups responsible for implementation been thoroughly addressed? Are the groups/individuals varied so that the burden for implementation does not fall on just one or two individuals?
- Have clear indicators of success been identified for each action step so the school knows what action steps have been implemented and with what result?
- Have timelines been thoroughly addressed?
- Are the action steps sufficiently detailed to provide a road map for the school?
- Does the action plan clearly outline what will be done for the next 2-3 years? Is there a broad outline of what may be done in years 3 through 5 of the plan?
- Is the action plan reasonable and achievable?

NOTE: The above criteria apply to each action plan.

ACTION PLAN FORMAT

Objective:

Activity:	Responsibility of:	Timeline:	Resources Needed:	Indicators of Success:	Date Completed:
START EACH ACTIVITY WITH AN ACTION VERB	USE NAMES OF POSITIONS AND GROUPS, RATHER THAN PEOPLE	PUT START AND END DATES; YEAR 1 & 2 WILL BE SPECIFIC, YEARS 3, 4, 5 WILL BE GLOBAL	INCLUDE MONEY, PEOPLE. TIME, MATERIALS	INCLUDE INFORMAL, LESS QUANTITATIVE MEASURES, CHECK-POINTS AND ONGOING EVALUATIONS	FOR EACH ACTIVITY

ACTION PLAN FORMAT

Objective: By the year 2005, all students at East Middle School will demonstrate improved reading, writing, and language usage skills as evidenced by the following measures:

- a.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in reading
- b.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in writing
- c.) 12.2% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP mathematics communication outcome.
- d.) 16% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP science skills and processes outcome.
- e.) 29% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP social studies skills and processes outcome.
- f.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in language usage.
- g.) a 10 percentage point improvement in median scores of sixth graders on the CTBS in all three of the following areas: reading, language and language usage
- h.) 90% of sixth graders will pass the MFRT
- i.) 95% of seventh graders will pass the MFRT
- j.) 99% of eighth graders will pass the MFRT
- k.) 80% of seventh graders will pass the MFWT
- l.) 96% of eighth graders will pass the MFWT

Activity:	Responsibility of:	Timeline:	Resources Needed:	Indicators of Success:	Date Completed:
Provide staff development workshop for all teachers on developing scoring rubrics to assess essays.	Instructional facilitators	By 10/00	\$500 for consultant fee and travel expenses	Evaluation of session by participants Teachers develop and use scoring rubrics.	

Increase library collection in the areas of: --African American authors --art history --science fiction	Librarian	At least 10 books annually; ongoing activity	\$500 per year	Library circulation of new books	
Gather input from the faculty on ways to integrate reading, writing, and language skill development into the art curriculum.	Art teachers lead effort; all faculty invited to offer input.	By April 2000 (in time for K-12 Art Curriculum Development Committee's June meetings	none	List of ideas given to art teachers for possible inclusion in new curriculum. Art teachers describe how the staff input was incorporated into the new curriculum.	

etc.

etc.

BENEFITS OF DISTRICT-WIDE ACCREDITATION

PreK-12 accreditation results in.....

- *....improved vertical and horizontal articulation and communication.* Because activities are structured across the district, internal communication is improved. District-wide accreditation activities focus on a smooth transition from elementary to middle/junior high to high school levels and the continuity of student experiences from early childhood through secondary levels.
- *....improved student performance and organizational growth in the areas identified as district priorities.* Districts engaged in institution-wide accreditation activities are *required* to focus objectives on improved student performance and organizational growth. Concentrating on student performance objectives across the entire district ensures a consistent and concerted improvement effort on behalf of students served.
- *....the ability to align the accreditation process with district-wide strategic planning and school improvement efforts.* Most strategic activities are district-wide. Institution-wide accreditation, therefore, can enable schools and districts to combine strategic planning, school improvement, and accreditation into a single focused activity.
- *....the ability to align the accreditation process with state-mandated strategic planning and school improvement processes.* Increasingly, state education departments are requiring public schools to develop school improvement/strategic plans. Often these plans must be submitted on a district-wide basis. Because of the flexibility inherent in the Middle States accreditation protocols, state-mandated planning models can generally be used to meet certain accreditation requirements.
- *....significantly improved communications and awareness activities regarding the school improvement process.* A critical aspect of any school improvement process is informing the school community of plans for the future and celebrations of success. An institution-wide focus on these types of public relations activities ensures that the district speaks with “one voice” and presents a coherent and equitable view of the total school experience. When communications activities are orchestrated at a district-wide level, there is often a staff member available who has the knowledge and experience necessary to make the most of public relations efforts.
- *....greater understanding of and support for school improvement activities by the Board of Education* because the accreditation effort applies to all students in the entire district.
- *....more cost effective school improvement efforts* because priorities are clearly identified, schools are working together on shared initiatives, and the size of the evaluation team will be smaller.

- *....more effective alignment of budgeting procedures with school improvement initiatives.* In institution-wide efforts, the school improvement plan becomes more of a driving force for change than if only a segment of the school is involved. Thus, the plan can be more effectively budgeted for.
- *....a more thorough evaluation of improvement activities by the Middle States visiting team.* Because the entire district is involved in the accreditation process, the Visiting Team can conduct an evaluation of both district-level and site-specific planning processes. Thus, the accreditation process should be more valuable to everyone involved.

Summary Chart Comparing Middle States Association Accreditation Protocols

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Focus	Focus on: --the output of growth in measurable student performance areas -- the degree of compliance with MSA standards	Focus on: --learning area indicators --MSA standards for accreditation --content area standards --measurable student performance and organizational growth objectives	Focus on: --MSA standards for accreditation --individual curriculum areas --improvement plans
Stakeholder Involvement	--Broad stakeholder involvement including staff, administration, students, parents, Board, community members, etc.	--Broad stakeholder involvement including staff, administration, students, parents, Board, community members, etc.	--Primarily staff-driven with some involvement of the governance --Other stakeholders such as parents and students may be included
Structure of Self-Study and Planning Process	--Planning Team --Action Plan Teams (optional) --Implementation Teams (optional)	--Data Gathering Steering Committee --Planning Team --Action Plan Implementation Teams	--Steering Committee --Subcommittees for each MSA standard --Subcommittees for each curriculum area --Subcommittee to develop improvement plans
What the School Develops	School produces a narrative-style planning document with a summary of survey results for MSA accreditation standards	School produces a narrative-style planning document plus surveys for MSA accreditation standards, curriculum and instruction indicators, and content area standards for state or national curricula	School produces an in-depth school and community profile, a comprehensive self-study of twelve MSA accreditation standards, a comprehensive review of curriculum areas, and improvement plans

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Components of the Protocol	--Planning Process --Content of Plan (mission, beliefs, objectives, and action plans) --Middle States Accreditation Standards	Data Gathering Phase --Twelve Middle States Accreditation Standards reviews --Assessment of Curriculum and Instruction Indicators --Assessment of Content Standards --External Scan Planning Phase --Mission, beliefs, student performance and organizational growth objectives, and action plans --Planning Process	--School and Community Profile --Twelve Middle States Accreditation Standards reviews --Reviews of curriculum areas (at least nine areas) --Improvement plans
Objectives	Requires 2-4 measurable student performance objectives per school site	Requires 3-5 measurable student performance and/or organizational growth objectives per each school site, at least two of which must focus on student performance	Requires 3-5 measurable student performance and/or organizational growth objectives per each school site, at least two of which must focus on student performance
Measurability	Student performance objectives must be measurable by multiple assessment tools	Both student performance and organizational growth goals <u>must</u> be measurable by multiple assessment tools	Both student performance and organizational growth goals <u>should</u> be measurable by multiple assessment tools
Technical Review	Technical review of objectives and MSA approval required prior to team visit	Technical review of objectives and MSA approval required prior to team visit	No MSA approval required prior to team visit; Visiting Team reviews objectives on site
Validation/ Visiting Team Structure (typical)	Five member team for three and one-half day visit	Team of about 10 members for three and one-half days in the full team visit; 3 member team for three days if school requests extension of term	Team of 10-15 members for three and one-half days in the full team visit; 1-2 member team for a single day mid-point visit after five years

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Term of Accreditation	(Up to) Seven year accreditation term <i>(an institution can choose five or six year terms)</i>	Five year accreditation term, renewable for an additional five years	Five year accreditation term, renewable for an additional five years
Review: Accreditation Maintenance Requirements	Written progress reports not required; onsite, one-day, mid-point review at 2 ½ years; school conducts its own annual reviews	Written progress reports not required; an onsite, one-day, mid-point review at 2 ½ years; school is expected to conduct its own annual reviews	A major written progress report and update of improvement plans is required after five years; an onsite mid-point review at five years