

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**

**COMMISSION ON SECONDARY
SCHOOLS**



**STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION
FOR CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY
INSTITUTIONS**

2007

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Philosophy/Mission

Overview

A central tenet of the accreditation process is that a school operates with a clear understanding of its philosophy/mission, its belief system, and the objectives it aims to achieve. These shared understandings are a reflection of the specific needs of the students and the community served. Therefore, a philosophy/mission and beliefs can neither be adopted nor adapted from those of any other school. In an effective school, statements of philosophy/mission are systematically developed and regularly reviewed by the school's community.

Philosophy/Mission: A school's philosophy/mission statement can take many different forms. Some schools will have either a philosophy or a mission; some will have a vision statement; others will have all three. Often, it is a matter of "semantics" whether a statement is called a philosophy, a vision, or a mission.

Most typically, when Middle States refers to a *philosophy* statement, a longer statement is envisioned that is more philosophical and more "abstract" in nature. A philosophy generally provides the conceptual framework that the school espouses regarding the purposes of schooling, the nature of the learner, the nature of learning processes, and the nature of relationships that should exist within the school to affect student success positively.

A *mission*, on the other hand, generally is a shorter statement and is often just a sentence or two in length. The mission statement tends to provide a more concrete and immediate application of the philosophy and typically contains the following components.

- the school'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 purpose should be in the future)
- its *identity* (what makes the school unique)
- its *means/function* (how, in broad terms, it will do it)

Regardless of the format and whether the statements are called *philosophy* or *mission* statements, these documents should reflect in broad and visionary terms what the school is and is striving to become. While the philosophy/mission must acknowledge

the current status of the school, it should also identify and aspire to the ideal; it should reflect a vision of a preferred future. The philosophy/mission should address the specific, local situation and should identify the school's distinctiveness and the one-of-a-kindness that sets the school apart from other educational schools. The philosophy/mission and beliefs form the foundation for the entire self-study process and set the direction and focus for the organization.

Key Definitions

- **Stakeholders** – Individuals or groups that have a stake in the future of the school; may be the staff, administration, students, parents, Board members, community members, alumni, business partners, and the like
- **Philosophy** – The conceptual framework the school espouses regarding the purposes of schooling, the nature of the learner, the nature of learning processes and the nature of relationships that should exist within the school to positively affect student success. Typically, this is a longer statement and is often more philosophical and “abstract.”
- **Mission** – The unifying theme that illuminates the reason for the existence of the school, the audience that it serves, and the organization's distinctive character. Typically, this is a shorter statement, often a sentence or two in length, and provides a more concrete and immediate application of the philosophy.
- **Beliefs** – The ethical core of moral behavior and conduct that support the philosophy/mission.

The Standard: The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school's philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

PM.1 – PM.5 Indicators for All Institutions

MSA Indicator
PM.1. The institution takes steps to ensure that students and their families understand and support the institution's philosophy/mission.
PM.2. The philosophy/mission is consistent with ethical norms and demonstrates respect for persons of all races, creeds, and cultures.
PM.3. The philosophy/mission is free of contradiction, ambiguity, and excessive abstraction.
PM.4. The institution implements a system to assess its effectiveness in fulfilling its philosophy/mission.
PM.5. The institution's philosophy/mission is clearly communicated in its brochures, promotional materials, policy and procedural handbooks, web site, and similar resources.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Governance and Leadership

Overview

Effective school leadership and governance are key to the long-term well being of any high quality institution. The governance and leadership need to work in partnership to carry out the school/district philosophy and mission to assure the integrity and reputation of the school/district.

In a single-site independent school, the governance and leadership functions are generally consolidated within a governing body, often a Board of Trustees, and the head of the school. There will often be level-specific administrative roles such as upper or lower school heads as well.

In public school districts and diocesan school systems, an additional “layer” of administration is in place at the central office level. Typically, school systems of this type have a governing body, a superintendent with a central office, and then multiple school-level administrative structures.

Because of MSA’s diversity and the variety of school structures served, components of the Governance and Leadership self-study are divided into sections that address schools that are and are not part of a larger system of schools. Each section is further divided between who in the school organization is the focus of the self-study analysis (i.e. governance, central office leadership, school site leadership).

Key Definitions

- **Governance**—refers to the group of individuals responsible for setting the overall direction of the school/district and the means by which new policy is established and existing policy is changed. Typically, this includes selecting, evaluating, and supporting the head of school, policy development, planning, assessing the school’s performance, and ensuring adequate resources to accomplish the school’s philosophy, mission and/or objectives. May go by different names such as trustees, board of education, governing body, or advisory council.

- **Leadership**—refers to those individuals responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school/district.
 - *Central office leadership*—refers to individuals within a school system who typically have responsibilities related to the operation of multiple schools. This may include superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of secondary/elementary education, curriculum coordinators, and the like.
 - *School leadership*—refers to individuals typically located on a single school site. In smaller schools, this may be just the head of school. In larger schools, this may include deputy head, dean of studies, principals, upper/lower school heads, vice principals, and so on.

The Standard: The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

GL.1 – GL.16: Indicators for institutions that are not part of a larger system or corporation (e.g., independent)

MSA Indicator
GL.1: The governance and leadership work cooperatively to establish and maintain clear, written policies and procedures that are consistent with the institution’s philosophy/mission. These policies and procedures are implemented at all times and reviewed regularly.
GL.2: The governance and leadership provide appropriate opportunities for education of the trustees/board, including orientation and training sessions so that all members understand their responsibilities and roles.
GL.3 The governance and leadership appropriately recognize the accomplishments of staff and students.

MSA Indicator
GL.4: No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and any corporate linkages in ownership/governance are expressed as enforceable agreements.

Governance

MSA Indicator
GL.5 The governance provides the institution with effective leadership, support, and continuity, including succession planning to ensure stability of the institution's leadership.
GL.6 The governance thinks and acts strategically, reflecting on its decisions and the consequences of its actions.
GL.7 The governance systematically evaluates its own effectiveness in performing its duties.
GL.8 The governance is focused on selection, evaluation, and support of the head of the institution; policy development; planning; assessing the institution's performance; and ensuring the availability of adequate resources to accomplish the institution's philosophy/mission.
GL.9 Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the leadership to conduct the daily operation of the institution.
GL.10 The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the institution. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the institution.

Leadership

MSA Indicator
GL.11 The head of the institution is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.

MSA Indicator
GL.12 The leadership ensures that all institution programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
GL.13 The leadership ensures that professional and support staff members stay well informed about educational developments.
GL.14 The leadership undertakes operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the institution’s mission and goals.
GL.15 The leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.
GL.16 The institution leadership maintains appropriate and constructive relations with families, students, staff, the community, and with each other in the interest of serving the needs of the students.

GL.17–GL.36: Indicators for institutions in public school districts, Archdiocesan/ diocesan systems, corporations, and other organizations with a central office staff

Governance

MSA Indicator
GL.17 The governance works cooperatively to establish and maintain clearly formulated written policies and procedures that are consistent with the institution’s philosophy/mission. The policies and procedures are implemented and reviewed regularly.
GL.18 No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and any corporate linkages in ownership/governance are expressed as enforceable agreements.
GL.19 The governance provides appropriate opportunities for education of the trustees/board, including orientation and training sessions so that all members understand their responsibilities and roles.

MSA Indicator
GL.20 The governance appropriately recognizes the accomplishments of the staff and students.
GL.21 The governance provides the institution with effective leadership, support, and continuity, including succession planning to ensure stability of the institution leadership.
GL.22 The governance thinks and acts strategically, reflecting on its decisions and the consequences of its actions.
GL.23 The governance implements a system for evaluating its own effectiveness in performing its duties.
GL.24 The governance focuses its activities on selecting, evaluating, and supporting the head of the institution system, policy development, planning, assessing the organization's performance, and ensuring adequate resources to accomplish the organization's philosophy/mission.
GL.25 Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the leadership to conduct the daily operation of the institution system.
GL.26 The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the institution system. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the organization.

Central Office Leadership

MSA Indicator
GL.27 The head of the institution system is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.
GL.28 The central office leadership ensures that all institution system programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
GL.29 The central office leadership stays well informed of educational developments.

MSA Indicator
GL.30 The central office leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.

Institution Leadership

MSA Indicator
GL.31 The institution leadership maintains appropriate and constructive relations with families, students, staff, the community, and with each other in the interest of serving the needs of the students.
GL.32 The institution leadership undertakes operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the institution's mission and goals.
GL.33 The head of the institution is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.
GL.34 The institution leadership ensures that all institution programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
GL.35 The institution leadership ensures that members of the professional and support staffs stay well informed of educational developments.
GL.36 The institution leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.

GL.37: Indicator for institutions that provide distance education

MSA Indicator
GL.37 The institution's leadership includes personnel with expertise in distance education methodologies.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: School Improvement Planning

Overview

Simply stated, effective schools engage in planning. They do so to ensure ongoing growth, improvement, self-renewal, and proactive anticipation of and response to future challenges and opportunities.

Artful and effective planning can engender school growth and improvement in at least four meaningful and significant ways. First, effective planning involves the school and its stakeholders in an *inductive* process that allows varied issues, concerns, hopes, and aspirations to be raised. It can open up boundaries and create new vistas, offering a forum for new, never dreamed of ideas to surface.

Second, effective planning begins with the development of a vision for the future and follows with self-evaluation and data collection to determine how close the school is to achieving its vision. A vision-driven process fosters commitment and ownership, and ownership is a powerful force for school growth and improvement.

Third, effective planning requires a school to focus on results first. In order to determine how to accomplish its mission, the school must first decide exactly what it wants to achieve, or example, the result of a well-taught class is not that the instruction was completed appropriately, but that following completion of instruction, learning occurred. Instruction is the means, learning is the result, and learning is reflected in student performance.

A fourth characteristic of effective planning is that it is continuous. Change is ubiquitous; therefore, planning must be ongoing.

Key Definitions

- **Long range planning** – Planning that assumes the future is fixed and already known; the operative activity for the institution is “adaptation.” The locus of control in long range planning is often external to the organization and not based on a vision of what the future could be or might be.

- **Comprehensive planning** - Planning that assumes existing systems can be perfected and that these systems deserve to be perfected.
- **Strategic planning** – Planning that assumes that the organization “can create its own future” through a bold, well-articulated vision of a preferred future. Strategic planning assumes that as a human organization, schools/districts have the ability to exercise control over external factors and can create the future. Strategic planning is grounded in how the organization sees itself and how it sees the world; it is about creating the desired reality and going about building that future.

The Standard: The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school’s philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

MSA Indicator
SI.1 The school’s improvement plans are developed with broad-based school community participation and input.
SI.2 Information about the school’s planning processes, its improvement plans and goals, and the results of implementing the improvement plans are communicated to stakeholders and the public.
SI.3 Improvement plans are supported by the school community and approved by the governance where appropriate.
SI.4 Periodic external reviews validate the school’s processes for strategic or long-range planning and school improvement.
SI.5 The school can document its long-range planning for finances, facilities, and technology enhancement.
SI.6 Improvement plans are based on an analysis of historical data, baseline performance information, trend data, and projections.
SI.7 The school’s improvement plans are reviewed periodically to determine the extent to which outcomes meet expectations so that corrective actions can be taken as needed.

MSA Indicator

SI.8 Planners consider the capacities of its facilities, equipment, and staff before adopting new programs.

SI.9 School improvement planning provides criteria and procedures, where applicable, for identifying the need for new programs and how they are to be implemented, including:

- Needs of the local/regional job market
- Adequacy of potential enrollment
- Availability of qualified instructors
- Availability of necessary financial resources
- Availability of needed facilities and equipment

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Finances

Overview

A most important and necessary resource of any educational institution is the funding and sound management of fiscal matters. Members of the school community rightfully expect that effective fiscal planning and management will ensure that a high standard of educational programs and services is offered.

Since local economic and market conditions can often change with little warning, financial resources must not only be adequate to cover immediate operating expenses, but also be capable of creating a reserve fund. This is especially true for non-public schools that rely upon tuition and fees as the primary source of operating capital.

Definitions

- **Financial Audit**—A systematic investigation, review and verification of the financial operations of the school; typically, the most effective audits are performed by a professionally trained and licensed accountant who is external to the school and unrelated to the school community.

- **Annual Per Pupil Cost**—The recommended way of deriving this number is as follows: Total operating costs divided by the number of students = annual per pupil cost.

The Standard: Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes is dedicated to the school's operations.

FI.1 – FI.12: *Indicators for all institutions*

MSA Indicator
FI.1 The school implements written financial policies and procedures that are in accordance with accepted business practices.
FI.2 The governance and leadership exercise prudent control over all financial operations.
FI.3 Levels of income and expenditures are in appropriate balance. Current assets are sufficient to meet current liabilities.
FI.4 Finances are currently stable and projections indicate continuing stability.
FI.5 The school develops short- and long-range financial plans to ensure resources are available to deliver its educational program and services.
FI.6 Stakeholders have opportunities to provide input into financial plans. The staff is involved in determining priorities for curriculum and instructional needs.
FI.7 Families enrolling students in the school are informed in advance of all financial obligations for attending the school.
FI.8 Those entrusted with overseeing and conducting the financial and business operations of the school possess appropriate qualifications.
FI.9 Periodic audits or financial reviews are conducted by qualified external agencies and the school responds appropriately.
FI.10 The school has written, reasonable, and equitable tuition, collection, and refund policies.
FI.11 The school carries adequate insurance coverage including business interruption, casualty, property, and liability insurance for employees and the governance/owner, as appropriate.
FI.12 The school makes prudent use of resources available through development activities, grants, foundations, and other partnerships.

FI.13 – FI.17: Indicators for institutions that provide career and technology programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students

MSA Indicator
FI.13 The institution has no contingent liabilities or on-going litigations that potentially could affect the institution’s ability to continue operation.
FI.14 Financial aid programs are administered in accordance with regulations of the funding agency.
FI.15 Records of financial aid programs are maintained in accordance with regulations of the funding agency.
FI.16 Refunds, when due, are made without requiring a request from the student.
FI.17 Refunds, when due, are made within 30 days of 1) the last day of attendance if written notification of withdrawal has been provided by the students, or 2) the date the institution terminates the student or determines that the student has withdrawn.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard:
Facilities

Overview

A school’s facilities are important in so far as they either enhance or limit the school’s ability to meet student needs and to address the philosophy/mission of the institution effectively. It is expected that the facilities conform to all applicable local, state, and national codes and statutes. While the aesthetics of the facilities likely influence the culture of a school, the beauty of the facilities is of less concern than the health, safety, versatility, and compatibility of the facilities to the purposes of the school.

Key Definitions

- **Facilities**—The school’s physical plant, buildings, grounds, athletic activities areas, equipment, and furnishings, including the dormitory residences and parking lots.

The Standard: School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

FA.1 – FA.6: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
FA.1 The school’s facilities and equipment are appropriate for achieving its philosophy/mission and are healthy, safe, and well maintained.
FA.2 The school plans for, funds, and schedules regular preventative measures, repairs, and maintenance of its facilities and equipment.

MSA Indicator
FA.3 The facilities offer a variety of spaces for providing quality programs and services for all segments of the school's population and include appropriate accommodation for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. instruction b. administration c. conferences d. student activities e. student services f. storage of school property g. storage for student belongings
FA.4 Sufficient systems are in place to monitor and adjust air quality to appropriate levels.
FA.5 Lighting is adequate and appropriate in student and staff areas.
FA.6 Sufficient space is available for ingress, egress, and traffic flow within the facilities.

FA.7 – FA.10: Indicators for institutions that provide career and technology programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students

MSA Indicator
FA.7 A regular and systematic assessment of the adequacy of the institution's facilities is conducted.
FA.9 Long-range and strategic plans include planning for facilities maintenance, renovation, and/or expansion.
FA.10 The capacities of the facilities and equipment are considered before adopting new programs.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: School Climate and Organization

Overview

While the governance and leadership of an organization are key to the establishment of a clear direction and effective planning, the school climate and organization of an institution are critical to smooth, day-to-day operation and management. Together, governance, leadership, school climate and organization furnish the means by which a school/district can effectively address its philosophy, mission, beliefs, and objectives.

The organizational design of an institution provides the structural framework for the delivery of the educational program and the provision of student services and student activities. It provides the platform for ensuring that health and safety needs are met, financial obligations are addressed, and the facilities are appropriate and accessible. A fundamental aspect of a school/district's organizational design is its staff, including administration, instructional staff, and support staff. Analysis of this standard should include data accumulated in the Profile of the School and Its Community (Part II) section of the self-study.

Key Definitions

- **Organization** – Refers to the ways a school or district is deployed or structured for the purposes of serving its students and the school community.
- **Climate** – The overall atmosphere, mood, and spirit of the institution; includes such issues as the environment for learning and teaching, how welcome individuals feel in the institution, the quality of relationships, and the perceived level of satisfaction with the institution and its programs and services. Climate includes the intended way of working and living together that shapes the behavior of the individuals within the institution and its community. Traditions, language, history, and customs are all a part of the culture of the institution as are the shared values and attitudes of parents, the staff, and students.
- **Staff** – Refers to all individuals who work on behalf of the school organization; typically, these will be paid employees. This includes administration, teaching faculty, librarians, guidance counselors, nurse, and support staff (e.g., secretaries, maintenance, etc., whether employment is on a full or part-time basis).

The Standard: The school’s organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

SC.1 – SC.19: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
SC.1 The school’s design, organization, climate, and leadership support attainment of the school’s philosophy/mission.
SC.2 Designated, qualified leadership provides coordination, supervision, and direction for the educational program, student services, and student activities.
SC.3 A logical and clear table of organization for the school includes written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
SC.4 Administrative, instructional, and support staffs are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program, student services, and student activities.
SC.5 Staff members, including administrators, are assigned to work based on their education, preparation, experience, expertise, and commitment to the school’s success.
SC.6 The school implements written personnel policies and procedures for the operation of the school and makes them available to all employees.
SC.7 The school implements written policies and procedures for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment for all staff.
SC.8 The school implements written policies and procedures for evaluating staff performance. Performance appraisals are conducted with the knowledge of the staff member and reported in writing as well as verbally. Results are used to make professional development recommendations. Staff members have an opportunity

MSA Indicator
to discuss and appeal their appraisals.
SC.9 Staff members are provided opportunities to offer input into the content of their professional development programs.
SC.10 The school implements written policies and procedures for handling complaints/grievances by members of the staff.
SC.11 The school implements written policies and procedures for orienting and mentoring new staff members.
SC.12 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure that service providers not employed by the school are appropriately oriented, supervised, and supported.
SC.13 The working environment for the staff promotes collegiality, high expectations, trust, support, and recognition for accomplishments and contributions.
SC.14 Professional satisfaction and good general morale characterize the school's staff.
SC.15 Staff members are committed to the school, dedicated to their work, and take pride in the outcome of their efforts.
SC.16 The leadership encourages staff members' affiliation with professional organizations.
SC.17 The school's families and community demonstrate commitment to, pride in, and support for the school through participation, promotion of its mission, and financial support.
SC.18 Members of the staff, students, and their families feel safe in the school.
SC.19 A clearly defined, written code of student conduct supports an environment that is conducive to learning and is understood by students, staff, and families. The code is enforced fairly and uniformly.

SC.20 – SC. 28: Indicators for schools in public school districts, archdiocesan/ diocesan systems, and other schools organizations with a central office

MSA Indicator
SC.20 A logical and clearly understood table of organization exists for the system of schools with written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
SC.21 The design, organization, and climate of the system of schools support attainment of the school’s philosophy/mission.
SC.22 Administrative, instructional, and support staffs of the central office are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program, student services, and student activities.
SC.23 Central office staff members possess the qualifications of education, preparation, experience, and commitment that contribute to the school’s success. Staff members are assigned to work by reason of their training and expertise.
SC.24 The central office’s leadership and staff work cooperatively to create a climate for teaching and learning that fosters the attainment of the school’s philosophy/mission.
SC.25 The organization implements written personnel policies and procedures for the operation of the system of schools and makes them available to all employees.
SC.26 The organization implements written policies and procedures for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment.
SC.27 Central office leadership supports a comprehensive program of professional development for all members of the staff that addresses system-wide learning expectations and specific student needs by allocating appropriate time and resources.
SC.28 Central office leadership encourages the school staff members’ affiliation with professional organizations.

Indicators SC.29 through SC.31 of the School Climate and Organization Standard apply to institutions with early age programs only. Therefore, they have been omitted from this protocol.

SC.32: *Indicator for institutions that provide distance education*

MSA Indicator
SC.32 Appropriately qualified faculty members participate in distance-learning tasks including grading student work, telephone consultation with students, academic counseling, course.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Health and Safety

Overview

This section of the self-study focuses on broad health and safety issues that are important to schools in a contemporary society. Negative developments of recent years such as substance abuse, violence, and terrorism have increased awareness of the need for more sophisticated crisis management plans and training. Neighborhood safety, playground safety, and school security have risen to be major concerns.

The subcommittee will look closely both at the services provided for the preventive and emergency health needs of students and the school's procedures to deal effectively with potential catastrophic emergencies that could affect the entire school population. This section also examines discipline and codes of conduct as a means of establishing clear expectations for acceptable and appropriate behavior.

Key Definitions

- **Health Services** – Services designed to assist in protecting or improving student health and to secure information needed to assist in adapting school programs to the abilities of students. This may include both medical and dental services and can be preventive, positive intervention, or emergency in nature.
- **Health and Safety** – School-wide issues requiring plans to deal with injury and disease and with fire, tornado, bomb threats, violence, and other security concerns as well as ways to *prevent* health and safety problems through effective planning and appropriate behavior management

The Standard: A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.

HS.1 – HS.15: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
HS.1 The school has satisfactory written procedures and functional equipment with which to communicate during fire and other emergencies, to summon assistance, and to evacuate the school's facilities.
HS.2 The school provides adequate health care at school functions that take place away from the school's premises.
HS.3 Appropriate training is provided for all staff members on how to implement emergency and crisis plans, handle accidents and illnesses, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
HS.4 The school appropriately manages the storage and administration of student medications.
HS.5 The school safely stores equipment and supplies.
HS.6 A system exists to account for the whereabouts of students at all times.
HS.7 The school maintains comprehensive, current health records for all students and staff.
HS.8 The school conducts and maintains written records of regular emergency drills.
HS.9 Designated members of the staff inform faculty and families (as appropriate to maintain confidentiality) about students' health or physical needs.
HS.10 The school ensures that the staff is kept up-to-date on relevant health, wellness, and safety information and practices, including procedures to deal with individual student needs.
HS.11 Working relationships with local authorities and health service providers are positive and ongoing.
HS.12 The educational program includes opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary for personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle.
HS.13 The school has an effective system to control access to the school by visitors and other non-school personnel.
HS.14 Staff members model positive health and safety practices.

MSA Indicator
HS.15 Safe drinking water is available throughout the day for the staff and students.

HS.16– HS.22: Indicators for institutions that provide career and technology programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students

MSA Indicator
HS.16 Records are maintained of inspections and compliance audits for all local, state, and national fire, safety, and health regulations and standards.
HS.17 Instructional equipment is maintained in a safe and healthy condition and meets local, state, and national fire and safety standards.
HS.18 The institution has a plan in operation that provides for regular health and safety inspections of the institution’s facilities and equipment. Records of inspections are maintained for at least three years.
HS.19 Instruction and practice in appropriate and safe use of all equipment are included in all programs.
HS.20 Evidence exists that appropriate and safe use of all equipment and wearing of all safety equipment are enforced in all instructional areas.
HS.21 All instructional areas are posted with required safety notices, including requirements for wearing safety equipment, fire/crisis evacuation procedures, etc.
HS.22 Instructional areas with power equipment are equipped with appropriate emergency shut off devices.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard 8: Educational Program

Overview

An effective educational program for a school consists of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs and solid instructional pedagogy. Also fundamental to a successful educational program are the means to assess student performance and growth as well as programmatic evaluation. Thus, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are often considered to be the “heart” of any school since these three components have such an impact on the total school experience of students. The curriculum outlines what students should know and be able to do. Instruction identifies effective ways for teachers to ensure student learning takes place. Assessment indicates at what level students are able to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Key Definitions

- **Educational programs** – The curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes within a school or school system.
- **Vertical Articulation** – The way in which learning experiences and skills at a given level form a foundation to support successful learning at the next higher level.
- **Horizontal Articulation** – The integration of skills, learning, and experiences across various curriculum areas at the same level.

The Standard: The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school’s mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

EP.1 – EP.16: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
EP.1 Written curriculum guides identify program objectives and define the scope and sequence of the educational program. The guides are functional, available, and in use.
EP.2 The educational program provides instruction in the basic subject areas of language arts and literature (including early language development and literacy skills, speaking, writing, and listening communication skills), mathematics, the sciences, and social sciences.
EP.3 The educational program includes experiences in visual and performing arts, health, world languages, and physical education.
EP.4 The educational program provides experiences that promote students' critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving skills, and study skills.
EP.5 The educational program includes instruction in effective uses of information technology and provides opportunities for application.
EP.6 A variety of group learning settings (e.g., individual, small group, large group) is provided for students daily.
EP.7 The educational program offers opportunities for development of social skills—such as increasing self-control and a sense of individual and group responsibility—in interaction with adults and peers.
EP.8 Written curriculum and instruction policies and procedures provide direction to the staff, leadership, and other stakeholders in the development, implementation, and improvement of the educational program.
EP.9 Provision is made for both horizontal and vertical articulation and coordination of the educational program among all levels of the school.
EP.10 An overview of the educational program, school policies and procedures, and other pertinent information is available in written form to students and their parents.
EP.11 The educational program defines desired student outcomes as expressed in terms of student understanding, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits.

MSA Indicator
EP.12 Course or program objectives are simply stated and understandable to students.
EP.13 The educational program considers the ages, cultures, and varying levels of ability of students.
EP.14 The instructional program is designed to meet students' needs in accordance with the school's philosophy/mission.
EP.15 The educational program and its expectations for learning are understood and supported by the school's stakeholders.
EP.16 Curriculum development is a dynamic, emergent process influenced by the attributes and interests of the children, their families, and teachers.

NOTE: Indicators 8.17 through 8.27 for the Educational Program Standard are applicable only to schools with early age, elementary school, and/or middle school programs. Therefore, they have been omitted from this protocol.

EP.28 – EP.31: Indicators for institutions with secondary programs

MSA Indicator
EP.28 The educational program facilitates a smooth transition from elementary or middle school to secondary school.
EP.29 The educational program develops academic knowledge and skills as well as career competencies.
EP.30 The educational program provides appropriate educational programs for students who are concluding formal study as well as those planning further education.

EP.31 The educational program develops habits of the mind and attitudes required for success in further education and in the workplace.

EP.32 – EP.36: Indicators for institutions that provide distance education

MSA Indicator
EP.32 Student interaction (synchronous and asynchronous) with faculty and other students is facilitated through a variety of means as an essential characteristic of the educational program.
EP.33 Students and their families (if appropriate) are informed about any aspects of the educational program that are created or delivered by an organization other than the school.
EP.34 Stated student performance outcomes for programs delivered through distance education are achievable through that methodology.
EP.35 Instructional materials are developed by authors qualified in distance education techniques. Textbooks and other instructional materials are suitable for distance learning.
EP.36 Appropriate study skills necessary for students to utilize a distance education model effectively and efficiently are included as part of the educational program and instructional process.

EP.37 – EP.42: Indicators for institutions that provide career and technology programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students

MSA Indicator
EP.37 The educational program and all component courses are developed with input from an advisory committee consisting primarily of business/ industry representatives external to the school.

MSA Indicator
EP.38 Business/industry advisory committees meet at least once annually, and records of committee decisions and recommendations regarding the educational program are maintained.
EP.39 Together with the business/industry advisory committee, the school undertakes a systematic and regular review at least biannually to ensure the educational program is responsive to local and regional job markets needs and standards.
EP.40 Together with the business/industry advisory committees, the school undertakes systematic and regular review at least once annually to ensure that the written curriculum for the educational program is actually taught. The review process focuses on what is to be deleted from the curriculum as well as what is to be added.
EP.41 Criteria and procedures exist and are applied by the school and business/industry advisory committee to terminate the educational program when it is no longer responsive to local and regional job markets.
EP.42 The school has appropriate teach-out agreements with other institutions 1) accredited or preaccredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, 2) that have the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and is reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the school, and 3) have demonstrated they can provide students access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel substantive distances.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning

Overview

The primary function of assessment of student learning should be to improve student performance. With that in mind, effective assessment serves several purposes. The regular assessment of student learning enables teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. It allows students to monitor their own learning processes and provides essential information to parents on their child's growth. Assessment results should assist in making appropriate resource allocation decisions as well as determining staff development needs. Finally, the assessment of student learning is an essential part of program evaluation.

An important feature of the assessment of student learning is that student growth is effectively and appropriately communicated to parents/guardians, students, staff, and school community.

Key Definitions

- **Assessment** – Any activities designed to determine how much students know and are able to do; also refers to activities designed to evaluate the success of the overall program; this includes standardized tests and assessments tools designed by the school/district.

The Standard: The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

AL.1 – AL.15: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
AL.1 The leadership and staff commit to, participate in, and share in accountability for student learning.
AL.2 Assessment of student learning and performance is aligned with curriculum and instruction in a coherent system consistent with the school's philosophy/mission.
AL.3 Assessment results are analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor for: a. individual students as they move through the school b. cohorts of students as they move through the school comparable (local, state, and national) groups outside of the school
AL.4 Assessment results are used to make decisions regarding allocation of resources.
AL.5 The assessment of student learning and performance enables students to monitor their own learning progress and teachers to adapt their instruction to students' specific learning needs.
AL.6 Assessment methods and content address suitable social, emotional, physical, and cognitive/language goals for students.
AL.7 Assessments take into account recent, reliable research findings on child development and growth.
AL.8 Assessments reflect understanding of the unique needs and backgrounds of each student.
AL.9 Records of students' learning and performance are maintained. General standards for transcript control and use, including those related to confidentiality, are known and observed.
AL.10 Assessment results are the basis for making recommendations to families whose children may benefit from further evaluation. Referrals to specialists are made for early identification of possible disabilities and/or health conditions.
AL.11 Members of the staff work collaboratively with colleagues and families to review data about learners' progress and to develop appropriate strategies for continued progress.

MSA Indicator
AL.12 Families are viewed as an important source of information and insights about students.
AL.13 The school communicates its assessment policies and practices to the total school community (e.g., via parent handbooks, web sites, teacher handbooks, policy manuals).
AL.14 Communication with families regarding students' progress in learning and performance is regular, productive, and meaningful.
AL.15 Students learn and perform at levels expected, or progress is being made to raise results accordingly.

Indicator AL.16 of the Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning Standard applies only to institutions with early age programs. Therefore, it has been omitted from this protocol.

AL.17 – AL.20 Indicators for institutions that provide distance education

MSA Indicator
AL.17 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure that students fulfill program requirements personally and without inappropriate assistance.
AL.18 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure the identity of the students when assessment of learning is conducted electronically or by means other than in a location in which the student is in the presence and under the direct supervision of a staff member.
AL.19 Members of the staff who evaluate student assignments are qualified in the fields they are evaluating.
AL.20 Data on lesson and course completion rates are used to evaluate and revise, as needed, instructional and educational services.

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard 10: Student Services

Overview

The primary purpose of providing student services is to optimize student learning. As schools have accepted increased responsibility for meeting the diverse needs of students, they have inevitably become involved in a wider range of services. The Student Services Standard focuses on six types of services provided to students. These include: guidance and counseling services, health services, transportation services, food services, services for special needs students, and admissions and placement services.

Guidance and counseling functions are critical because of the complexity and multiplicity of academic, personal, social, emotional, and physical needs of today's students. The provision of effective health services is important in two ways; they assure a healthy learning environment for all students as well as ensure that individual students' general physical development is monitored.

Transportation services are provided to move students to and from the school and school events quickly, efficiently, and safely. While the role of food services is for students to be fed hearty and nutritional meals, there are implications for education on healthy living.

If students with special needs are enrolled in the school, a variety of services such as enrichment, psychological, speech and language support are key to the successful integration of students with special needs and talents into the school program. Admissions and placement services assure that the school accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success and that placements are made to encourage optimum student growth.

Key Definitions

- **Guidance**—those functions aimed at providing general direction, supervision, and tutelage to students in both academic and non-academic areas, so that students can become self-developing individuals; guidance activities may be provided on an individual or a group basis.

- **Counseling**—those functions aimed at providing advice on a specific issue or to help individuals cope with a particular problem; this could range from college counseling to psychological counseling; counseling is more typically provided on an individual basis.
- **Health Services**—those services designed to assist in protecting or improving student health and to secure information needed to assist in adapting school programs to the needs of students. This may include both medical and dental services and can be preventive, positive intervention, or emergency in nature.

The Standard: The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.

SS.1 – SS.26: Indicators for all institutions

Student Support Services

MSA Indicator
SS.1 Student support services address academic skills development, social skills development, personal growth, and career planning.
SS.2 Counselors, administrators, teachers, and/or other staff members share responsibility for providing guidance and support to students.
SS.3 The school is sensitive to the critical importance of non-academic needs of students. A process is in place to address students’ emotional and social needs.
SS.4 Assessment data are used to adapt curriculum and teaching methods, provide personalized counseling, and identify appropriate program placement for students.
SS.5 Career awareness activities are provided as appropriate.

MSA Indicator
SS.6 Student support services extend into and incorporate community services as needed.
SS.7 Student data are current, comprehensive, and readily available for the staff's use.
SS.8 Follow-up studies of graduates and other former students are carried out and data are shared with staff to help determine the effectiveness of the school's educational program and services.
SS.9 The school offers an orientation program for new students and their families to share the school's philosophy/mission, policies, procedures, and expectations.
SS.10 Families are provided with information about child development, education, and related topics through personal communications, pamphlets, meetings, and referrals to web sites and other resources.

Transportation Services

MSA Indicator
SS.11 Written policies and procedures are implemented to ensure the safety of students when being picked up, transported, and dropped off by transportation provided by the school.
SS.12 Appropriate training is provided to transportation providers.
SS.13 Transportation services provided or contracted by the school meet the safety requirements of all appropriate legal authorities.

Food Services

MSA Indicator
SS.14 Student dining areas are functional and hygienic.
SS.15 Meals provided by the school meet generally accepted nutritional standards. Information about nutritional values of the foods is available.
SS.16 Appropriate training is provided to food services providers.
SS.17 Food services personnel meet the health requirements of all appropriate authorities.
SS.18 Food service facilities are inspected regularly and meet the health and safety requirements of all appropriate authorities.

Services for Student with Special Needs

MSA Indicator
SS.19 The school implements written policies and procedures to identify and address the needs of students with special needs.
SS.20 The school provides or refers families to appropriate related services and/or accommodations to meet student needs.
SS.21 As applicable, the school is in compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements related to students with special needs.

Admissions and Placement

MSA Indicator
SS.22 The school implements written admissions policies and procedures.
SS.23 The school implements written policies and procedures for placement of students in appropriate programs and levels.
SS.24 Applicants for enrollment and their families are clearly informed of the philosophy/mission of the school, the nature and extent of the educational program and services available, tuition and fees (if applicable), school policies, and expectations for satisfactory student performance.
SS.25 The school accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success in the educational program as appropriate and interpreted by law.
SS.26 All statements and representations relating to the school's educational programs, services, and resources are clear, accurate, and current.

SS.27 – SS.31: Indicators for institutions that provide distance education

MSA Indicator
SS.27 Prior to admission, prospective students and their parents/guardians are advised about the self-motivation and commitment needed for successful distance learning and the technical competence required to participate and learn in the educational program.
SS.28 Admissions inquiries are handled in a prompt and thorough manner.
SS.29 Adequate advisory services are available for students who are having difficulty with their studies as well as for those who are rapid learners.
SS.30 Students are actively encouraged to start, continue, and finish the program in which they have enrolled.

MSA Indicator
SS.31 The institution implements written policies and procedures to evaluate students' previous academic work and to provide fair and consistent credit for their previous studies or work experience.

SS.32 – SS.41: Indicators for institutions that provide career and technology programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students

Student Records

MSA Indicator
SS.32 The institution maintains individual student's records, including information and data regarding application and enrollment, period of enrollment, tuition and/or fees, educational program, results of testing/assessment, course/program completion, education or job placement, and results of follow-up studies.
SS.33 The institution maintains individual student records, including information and data regarding application and enrollment, period of enrollment, tuition and/or fees, educational program, results of testing/assessment, course/program completion, education or job placement, and results of follow-up studies.
SS.34 Individual student records are maintained at the school's main campus.
SS.35 Duplicate copies of all student records are kept at a different location.
SS.36 The school has written procedures to ensure all student records are maintained in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Access to and distribution of student records, transcripts, and information are controlled to protect confidentiality and to ensure that only authorized personnel have access.
SS.37 Members of the staff responsible for creating and maintaining student records are adequate in number and qualifications.

MSA Indicator	
SS.38	Transcripts of student information and performance include, as a minimum, program of student, courses, and course units attempted and completed, assessment of learning, and period of enrollment.
SS.39	Student records are stored so they are protected from fire or other physical damage and from unauthorized access.

Services for Adult Learners

MSA Indicator	
SS.40	If the school processes Title IV financial aid, it has a default management plan that meets the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education that is operational for the period required by the Department.
SS.41	The school provides information to adult learners about services available at the school and/or in the community that will assist students to attend school and be successful in their programs (e.g., child care services, tutoring services, etc.).

Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Student Life and Student Activities

Overview

The student life and student activities programs should be an integral part of student life at the school. They should promote healthy attitudes toward the enrichment of learning and the constructive use of leisure time. Activities should supplement classroom experiences and/or community life and should foster a positive intellectual, cultural, and social climate, promote growth in student leadership and social interaction skills, and encourage students' special interests.

Also included in the self-study of the Student Life and Student Activities Standard is a segment for schools with a residential program. Schools with dormitory facilities need to pay particular attention to healthy relationships with adults in loco parentis and to a broadened definition of student life.

Key Definitions

- **Student activities** – Any school-sponsored activities offered either during or after school designed to complement or enhance the educational program; typically, student activities are non-credit activities in which students engage on a voluntary basis.

The Standard: A healthy atmosphere exists for all students. At all levels, non-discriminatory, appropriate student activities that supplement classroom experiences or community life are provided. An appropriate student activities program fosters a positive intellectual, cultural, and social climate, promotes growth in student leadership and social interaction skills, and encourages students' special interests.

SL.1 – SL.6: Indicators for all institutions

MSA Indicator
SL.1 Students are offered opportunities to build their skills in handling responsibility, taking initiative, leadership competencies, cooperation, and self-direction.
SL.2 Students, staff, families, and the community are encouraged to offer input about and participate in student activities.
SL.3 Staff members, parents, and other volunteers who lead or participate in student activities are approved by the school’s leadership, suitably qualified, and provide appropriate supervision to students.
SL.4 The school recognizes student accomplishments, contributions, and responsibilities in meaningful ways.
SL.5 Relationships among staff, volunteers, and students demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding.
SL.6 The school holds events that include staff, families, and children
.

SL.7 – SL.9: Indicators for boarding schools

MSA Indicator
SL.7 The school assists students to develop healthy relationships with adults in loco parentis and with other students.
SL.8 Provisions for student privacy, recreation, and religious practice are appropriate.
SL.9 Continuous and responsible supervision by qualified adults is provided for all boarding students, including evenings, weekends, and periods when classes are not in session.

The Middle States Association Accreditation Standard: Information Resources and Technology

Overview

In today's Information Age, the role of Information Resources and Technology as key tools to enhance the learning process require significant attention and dedication of resources. The students in today's schools have grown up with computers, all types of other technology, and information at their fingertips. As Alan Kay of Apple Computer once said, "Technology is only technology for those who were born before it was invented." Ensuring that students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to conduct research and interact with information effectively is an important challenge for schools. It is an area that requires much attention as the rapid pace of technological change and the explosion of information continues.

Information Resources and Technology programs and facilities take on various and unique forms depending on the philosophy and mission of the school, the size of the school, and the nature of the student population. Such programs range from traditional libraries to classroom libraries to technologically advanced media centers. Whatever form the school's Information Resources and Technology program takes, it should be an integral component of the school, and it should act as an extension of individual classroom experiences and the educational program.

Key Definitions

- **Information Resources** – All materials used to support the learning process including instructional and support materials used in classrooms and in the information resources center. This includes print resources such as books, magazines, newspapers, articles, and other reference materials as well as non-print resources such as videotapes, audiotapes, and software. Information resources may be housed in classrooms, an information resources center, or other resource centers; they may also be acquired via electronic means through online subscription services, email, or the Internet.
- **Technology** – All types of hardware and software programs including the Internet, local area networks, video conferencing, web casting, computers, electronic media, video cameras, PDAs, iPods, video cassette recorders, overhead and LCD projectors, telephones, television, smart boards, and so on used to provide access to information and to assist teaching and learning.

The Standard: Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school’s pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

IR.1 – IR.11: Indicators for all institutions

Information Resources

MSA Indicator
IR.1 Information resources are properly catalogued, housed, and periodically reviewed for relevancy and currency.
IR.2 Media center staff is sufficient and appropriately qualified to provide effective services to students and staff.
IR.3 Adequate orientation about the use of media services, learning resources, and equipment is provided to the staff and students.
IR.4 Information resources are appropriately supported annually with funding from the school’s budget.
IR.5 Information resources are age- and developmentally appropriate, current, and reflect social and cultural diversity.
IR.6 Staff and students are provided opportunities to offer input into the types, quality, and format of the information resources provided.

Technology

MSA Indicator
IR.7 The technology resources staff is sufficient and appropriately qualified to provide effective service to students and staff.
IR.8 Technology resources are appropriately maintained and supported annually with funding from the school's budget.
IR.9 Adequate skills training on the use of technology resources and equipment is provided to the staff and students.
IR.10 The school implements written policies and procedures for acceptable use of technology.
IR.11 Long-range planning activities are in place to ensure that the school keeps pace with technological changes.

Note: Indicators IR.12 through IR.15 of the Information Resources and Technology Standard applies only to schools with early age programs. Therefore, they have been omitted from this protocol.