

# Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools



## Mid-Point Review Manual for *Accreditation for Growth (AFG)* and *Validating the Vision (VTV)*

2004

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*Accreditation for Growth*  
and  
*Validating the Vision*  
**A Manual for the Mid-Point Review**

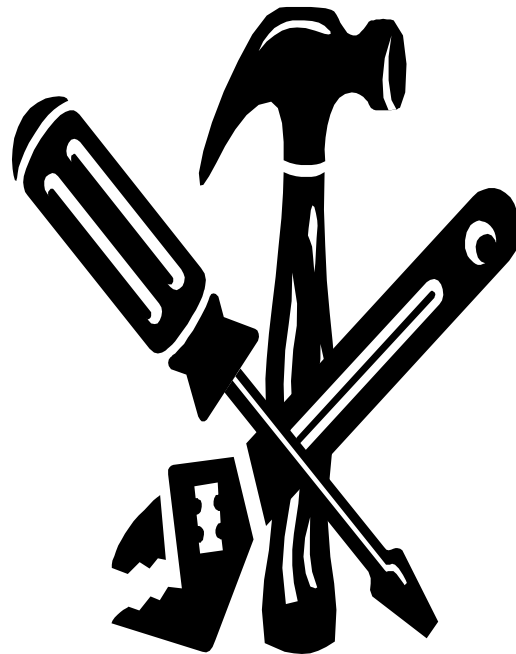
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# ***INTRODUCTION***

## **History of AFG**

In the early 1990s, Middle States Association decided to respond proactively to the comments it heard regarding the accreditation process. While visits from critical friends and a periodic self-study were deemed worthwhile and productive, the traditional process that had been in place for over 60 years needed to be more in line with the school improvement initiatives taking place in schools across the country. Some of the specific observations included the desire to reduce the cost of accreditation and the need to include visionary planning in any self-analysis done by an institution. The result of these discussions was the development and adoption of the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol.

The first institutions using this process were accredited in the spring of 1997. Feedback from these and subsequent visits improved the procedures in a variety of ways. First, the protocol moved from a three-year cycle to a five-year one. Members felt that five years was a more common and realistic time period for planning. This is when the Mid-Point Review was first included as a requisite part of the process. Also, minor changes were made in the required contents of the plan. For instance, Belief Statements were added and the Technical Review Checklists are now required parts of the materials sent to the Validation Team. Most recently, the *AFG* cycle has been moved to one of seven years. While the Mid-Point Review still occurs at the two and a half year mark, the time remaining in the cycle has been extended to allow institutions more time to achieve the growth they desire and to prepare for the next accreditation visit. As additional guides for institutions and chairs have been developed, the expectation is that more changes will occur as the process is refined and improved. Just as *AFG* is helping institutions improve, they in turn are helping *AFG* improve.



Today well over 600 educational institutions (schools, districts, and service agencies) are involved in the *Accreditation for Growth* process and that number grows daily. The Middle States Association (MSA) is encountering innovative institutions wishing to be leaders in the areas of student performance assessment. Planning Teams continue to define objectives and struggle with ways to measure what many believe is unmeasurable. Nonetheless, the creative approaches to institution-developed rubrics, surveys, and assessment tools are truly inspirational. The combination of external measures and those developed in-house are giving institutions a clearer picture of how students are learning in their institutions. In some cases, the process has helped institutions adapt to the requirements imposed by the No Child Left Behind legislation.

The next phase in the *AFG* process will enable them to recognize if their efforts have been fruitful and will keep them on the road to success.

## **Purposes of the Mid-Point Review**

The very nature of strategic planning and the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol itself requires that the process be living, dynamic, and on-going. This is not a “once and done” proposition. No longer can a plan gather dust on a shelf. As a result, Middle States concluded it is important to ensure that an institution accredited via *AFG* be committed to the process as well as to the plan. Rather than simply submitting a written report, an institution hosting a Mid-Point Reviewer has the opportunity to **show** how it “walks its talk” – how it does what it says it does. Middle States is looking not only for evidence of implementation of action plans and timelines, but that the institution has been critical and reflective about its progress.



In addition to examples of a culture of planning and review, the Mid-Point Reviewer is looking for indications of continuous progress of the plan itself. As a critical friend who is there to motivate and provide assistance to the institution, the one-day visitor\* will be examining the indicators of progress – annual reviews, modifications to the action plans, examples of demonstrable growth on the student achievement objectives. Again, as the name implies, accreditation is conferred by evidence of **growth** as an institution. The Mid-Point Review aims to ensure that this is a continuous process, not one that occurs once every seven years.

The purpose of sending a visitor who is familiar with the plan and the institution (Middle States attempts to send a person from the original Validation Team whenever possible) is to encourage that notion of growth. The Reviewer will know where the institution was and how far it has come. In some ways, the Reviewer will be able to share in those successes with the institution. He or she will certainly be a cheerleader for the forward momentum an institution exhibits, and can often help an institution get back on track in areas that may have gone astray.

Finally, the purpose of the Mid-Point Review is to ensure that institutions do not put their accreditation in jeopardy. It is an opportunity for MSA to raise a red flag for an institution that is in danger of misinterpreting the expectations of the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol. The report from the Mid-Point Reviewer acts as an “early warning system.” The Commission (via recommendations from the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee and staff readers) wishes to ensure that an institution has every opportunity to see its accreditation continued when the Validation Team revisits.

*\*in some multi-site visits, the visit may be two persons for two-days*

# ***FOR THE INSTITUTION***

## **What to prepare in advance**

Approximately two years after your initial Validation Team visit, a staff member from Middle States will notify your institution of the need to host a Mid-Point Reviewer. That notification begins the process of identifying, inviting, and confirming an appropriate Reviewer. After our office has confirmed the choice of Reviewer, you will be contacted by that person to determine a mutually acceptable date for the visit. Unlike Team visits, where schedules from different institutions must be taken into account, a one-day, one-person visit is often best scheduled by the Reviewer and hosting institution. You should report this date to MSA when it has been decided.

A minimum of two weeks before the visit, the following items should be sent to your Mid-Point Reviewer:

- ✓ A copy of the Validation Team report (your reviewer likely did not see the final version)
- ✓ A copy of the Official Notification of Accreditation
- ✓ A general chronology of events that have taken place since the last visit
- ✓ Evidence of annual reviews
- ✓ Data that indicates progress on the objectives
- ✓ Pertinent changes to the plan

*\*\*NOTE: No changes can be made to the AFG objectives themselves without prior approval from MSA*

If your choice of a Mid-Point Reviewer is coming from some distance, you may need to make arrangements for an overnight stay. The Review will take a full day and travel time will be limited. Discuss this with your Reviewer when you arrange for the date of the visit.



Another point to discuss with your Reviewer is a schedule of events for the day of the Review. Below you will see a listing of some of the people your Reviewer may wish to see. Since each institution and its plan are unique, this list could vary. Who needs to be free to meet on the day of the Review should be determined early on.

Please DO NOT make arrangements for a large, social gathering. The object of this visit is for it to remain focused, simple, and as non-intrusive as possible.

## **What to expect during the visit**

Your Mid-Point Reviewer wants to see your plan in action. He or she wants to see it alive and well at your institution. With only one day to do so, many people need to spend time with your Reviewer. The following is a suggested list. Your Reviewer may have other requests. This is

your opportunity to tout all that you have accomplished. Let as many people sing the praises of your success as you can.

- ✓ Internal Coordinator
- ✓ Planning Team
- ✓ Action Plan Teams
- ✓ Implementation Teams (if any)
- ✓ Administration
- ✓ Random Students
- ✓ Faculty

Question and answer sessions with these groups may be helpful, but in some cases it may be appropriate to have certain committees actually make brief presentations or progress reports to your Reviewer. The Implementation Teams, for example, may want to address what had to be changed, what worked well, and what was discarded and why. The object here is to give the Reviewer as much information about the progress of the plan as he or she can absorb.

Your Reviewer is also looking for an understanding of how the plan lives – **how** it is modified when necessary. How are suggestions made? Who evaluates and responds? How do changes affect priorities? Has the institution committed the resources (human, monetary, and otherwise) necessary for this plan to be successful? Be prepared to answer these types of questions, as well.

Remember, your Reviewer will want to see evidence of growth in your student performance objectives. Share the indicators you have used to measure your growth. Show how student achievement and growth in your institution has improved. If it hasn't, explain what you are doing differently to get your plan on the right track.

Finally, you will need to decide (preferably before you set the Reviewer's schedule) if you want an oral report from your Reviewer. You will, of course, receive a copy of his or her written report, and you should know that MSA does not require an oral report at the Mid-Point Review. But in some situations it may be appropriate to have a representative from Middle States address your institution – to help revitalize your plan; to have a public acknowledgement of it; to celebrate your accomplishments. Be advised, however, that one day is precious little time for one person to meet all that should have input to this report, synthesize the information, and compose and present a suitable oral report. As with many other aspects of *AFG*, it depends on your institution and your situation. Discuss it with your Reviewer.

## **What to expect after the visit**

Within three to four weeks after his or her visit to your institution, your Mid-Point Reviewer will submit a report to MSA. This report will be read by the staff in the office and, in turn, sent to you within two weeks. Unless there is evidence of concern, you will be notified that you have met the maintenance requirements of the protocol at that time. Your next accreditation activity will involve deciding on the next protocol to use for a self-study.

# ***FOR THE REVIEWER***

## **Before you arrive**

After you have accepted MSA's invitation to serve as a institution's Mid-Point Reviewer, you will receive a copy of the confirmation of that appointment that will included full contact information for you, the hosting institution, and Middle States staff. We ask that you contact the institution to arrange a mutually convenient date for the visit. The institution will notify the Middle States Office of the date. In all likelihood, you will be familiar with this institution and its plan. You should, however, receive a copy of the Validation Team report, and other pertinent information from the institution at least two weeks before your visit. You have much to do during your one-day visit, so please take the time to examine these materials before the Review.

You will need to notify the institution of the specific groups or people whom you wish to meet during your single day at the institution. We recommend you visit with the Internal Coordinator, the Planning Team, the Implementation Teams (if any), and members of the administration at the very least. Depending on the specifics of the plan, you may wish to add people to that list. For instance, if one of the objectives focuses on community service, it may be prudent to meet with the individual who has accepted responsibility for completion of the action plans, especially if he or she is not in one of the groups listed above. You may also wish to meet with students to gauge the widespread acceptance of the plan.



We have recommended to the institutions that brief presentations may be the most effective method of imparting information about the evolution of the plan to you. That information may be so evident in the written materials that a simple question and answer format may be more useful to you. It is, of course, your prerogative to gather information the way you see fit. Keep in mind, however, that some institutions may welcome the opportunity to allow stakeholders a chance to “blow their

own horns.” Again, you will know the specific situation and should make these decisions in consultation with the host institution before you arrive.

Determining the need for an oral report is another task that you should decide with the host institution. Middle States does not recommend an oral report at the Mid-Point Review. You have much to accomplish in one day! It may be appropriate for the institution, however, to have a public recognition of its achievements. On the other hand, it may be necessary for the institution to have its plan revitalized with this reminder of its importance. Again, it is a decision dependent on the situation.

We have provided a sample schedule in *Exhibit 1*. This is a sample and may vary on the institution's needs, its bell schedule, or that of the Planning Team members. Use it as a guide only.

Finally, remember that in addition to validating the plan, you are validating the institution's planning process. One of the parameters to participating in AFG is the acceptance of a planning

ethic at an institution. Is this plan alive, or is it artificially supported by one or two key people? Give yourself time in the schedule to determine the commitment to planning at your host institution.

## **During your visit**

While at the host institution you will spend the majority of your time interviewing the various stakeholders in the plan. Unlike the Validation Team visit, you will have little time for reflection and discussion. Your mission is simple: Is this institution on the right track for reaccreditation in a few years? In what ways can you, as a critical friend, assist this institution in meeting its objectives? How is this institution a better place than it was two or three years ago?

In *Exhibit 2* you will find a list of general questions that will assist you in gathering information for your report. (The report itself is discussed in the next section.) You will need to devise your own specific questions that relate to the plan and the institution itself. Some examples might include:

- ? Why did you abandon block scheduling from your action plans?
- ? Who is now responsible for implementing the community service requirement?
- ? What evidence can you give that the Planning Team is a viable group?
- ? Since your average SAT scores have actually dropped over the past two years, what new plans have you devised to bolster student achievement in this area?
- ? What impact will the building of a new gymnasium have on the priorities you have established in your plan?
- ? How did you decide to develop an all-student Implementation Team?

Remember as you ask these questions that you are not inspecting for faults, you are a friendly observer who is there to help. Questions should not be accusatory, but genuinely considerate of the decision-making process of the institution. You are a guest, and as such should show nothing but respect to the host institution.

## **The Report**

Your report to the Middle States Association on your host institution is due in the Middle States Office no later than four weeks after your visit. Experience has shown us that the sooner you complete your report, the easier it is to write. We will complete the final edit and send it to the institution. Should there be any major issues of concern, your report will also be read by the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee who will make recommendation for action to the Commission. Finally, your report will be made available to the seven-year Validation Team who next visits the hosting institution.



MSA would like the report to follow a specific format. Please see *Exhibit 3* for an example report and the specifics that should be included. Typically, MSA will send you a copy of the

template to be used for this report (complete with instructions for each section) with the confirmation notice. If you do not have a copy, please notify the office at once.

The report should follow this outline:

- I. Introduction**  
Explanation of the Mid-Point Review process within the accreditation cycle
- II. Context of the Institution**  
An update of the context since the last team visit; progress made on any recommendations made in the accreditation standards areas
- III. Mid-Point Review Checklist**  
A checklist based on the Re-Accreditation Rubric (Exhibit 4) on select aspects of the process and plan followed by brief summaries of explanation for ratings
- IV. Mid-Point Review Objectives Narrative Review**  
The text of the measurable student performance objectives, the annual data gathered, and a brief interpretation of progress
- V. Concluding Comments**

If an oral report is delivered to the institution and you have a written copy, please include a copy of it with the written report. We ask that you submit the final written document as an attachment to an email message to us within four weeks of the visit. Those who prefer not to use email may send a disk and a single printed copy via the US Postal Service. It is important for our record keeping, however, that we have an electronic version of the report.

As with any other Middle States report, please do not share this document with anyone other than the Middle States staff or the head of the host institution. All discussions, commendations, and recommendations should remain confidential.

# ***NEXT STEPS***

## **Commission Action**

The Commission on Secondary Schools, the Commission on Elementary Schools, and the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation meets twice a year in October and April. It is at this time that reports from all Team Visits and other Commission business is conducted. The Middle States staff, however, handles maintenance of accreditation unless issues of concern are raised at the Mid-Point Review. You will likely receive notification with your Mid-Point Review report that the maintenance requirements of your accreditation have been satisfied. In the event that issues are raised, the Mid-Point Review Report will be shared with the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee for a recommendation for action to be forwarded to the Commission. The Commission may choose to take action requiring a stipulation (a report or visit to be conducted within a one year window), a repeat Review to be conducted at the 4½ - year mark, or probationary accreditation (limiting the length of accreditation). In most cases, the Reviewers recommendations are all that are needed to help a school stay on track with the protocol.

Any disputes with the decision of the Commission should be directed to the Executive Director of the respective commission. Concerns about the report should be directed as soon as possible to the Middle States staff member working with the institution.

## **Preparing for the Next Visit**

Since one of the purposes of the Mid-Point Review is to provide assistance and direction to the institution in its goal of school improvement, it is imperative that the Planning Team thoroughly discuss the report of the Reviewer. The next seven-year Validation Team **will** be asking for responses to the report. If recommendations were not followed, the Validation Team will want to know why not. If suggested changes were not implemented (there may be perfectly valid reasons), the Validation Team will ask for an explanation. Always remember that Middle States Reviewers are at your institution in the role of critical friend. Their objectivity is a benefit you cannot overlook.

Preparing for the seven-year Validation Team visit should be a familiar activity. It will not, however, be entirely the same as the first time around. First, your Planning Team should already



be formed, active, and thoroughly enmeshed in the concept of growth in student achievement. If, as you hope, your objectives have been attained, then you are a different institution than you were five to seven years ago! Perhaps your mission has changed slightly (or drastically, or not at all). Perhaps the growth in student achievement in your institution has had an effect on your community that you can't ignore. It is time to rediscover who you are and reconfirm what you want to be.

Middle States offers workshops geared specifically for institutions who are faced with re-accreditation after having been through at least one cycle of the *Accreditation for Growth* or *Validating the Vision* process.

Guidelines for choosing an appropriate protocol, for completing a slightly different self-study, and for learning the updates to the protocol since the institution last entered the process (including receiving the latest manuals and supporting materials) are all covered in this workshop. Stateside members can sign up for these workshops through the Commission on Secondary Schools website ([www.css-msa.org](http://www.css-msa.org)). Overseas and Caribbean members should contact their staff liaison for more information .

At the least, institutions can be expected to review their progress in the previous cycle as well as look to the future as they set a new seven year strategic plan in place that impacts student performance.

Best of luck on the process. Rejuvenation can be a powerful impetus for change!

# ***EXHIBIT 1***

## **Sample Schedule AFG Mid-Point Review**

- 8:30 am Meeting with the Internal Coordinator and Institution Head
- 9:00 am Meeting with Planning Team
- 10:00 am Coffee Break with Faculty members
- 10:30 am Presentations by Implementation Teams  
Objective #1 – 10:30-11:00  
Objective #2 – 11:00-11:30  
Objective #3 – 11:30-12:00
- 12:00 noon Lunch with Students
- 1:00 pm Meeting with Internal Coordinator
- 1:30 pm Meeting with Administration
- 2:30 pm Follow-up meetings
- 3:30 pm Meeting with Institution Head

## ***EXHIBIT 2***

### **General Questions *AFG* Mid-Point Review**

#### **The Plan:**

Has anything changed in your plan since I was last here?

Are you going to reach your objective?

Which action plan has worked particularly well?

How have your new faculty and students learned about your plan?

Do you think your (institution-developed) measurement tools were effective?

What modifications have you made?

Is your mission statement still valid?

What percentage of the plan do you think you've already accomplished?

Is anything preventing you from meeting your timelines?

#### **The Process:**

What happened during your annual review?

How did you tell your community about your review?

Have you changed the composition of your Planning Team?

Did you have any trouble finding the resources you needed to accomplish your plans?

#### **Other:**

Do you think your institution is growing as an institution of learning?

How has *AFG* changed your institution?

# ***EXHIBIT 3***

## **Sample *AFG* Mid-Point Review Written Report**

### **I. Introduction**

The *Accreditation for Growth (AFG)* process is a five to seven-year accreditation protocol available to the member institutions of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Focusing on a preferred vision of the future, *AFG* utilizes a strategic planning model to ask institutions to develop two to four measurable student performance objectives as the lynchpin of an assessment of growth in school improvement. The process requires institutions to establish a planning ethic, develop a five to seven-year strategic plan, and meet established standards. Committing to *AFG*, Clinton Junior - Senior High School has agreed to the following:

- 1) It has committed to focusing on the end result—improved student performance—as the primary priority for school improvement efforts.
- 2) It has committed to operating from a vision of where it wants and needs to go with the mission and beliefs serving as a unifying force for change.
- 3) It has committed to including a varied spectrum of stakeholders in the process of continually defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing action plans developed by these stakeholders.
- 4) It has committed to a process where progress will be continuously reviewed.
- 5) It has agreed to participate in a peer review and external validation process by accepting outside visitors.

Developed by the Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS), *AFG* requires institutions who have committed to *AFG* to be visited every seven years by a team of volunteer educators acting as critical friends to validate the institution's plan and to assure that standards are being met. At the two and one half year mark in the seven-year cycle, a one person, one-day visit is arranged to review the institution's progress. The Mid-Point Reviewer is specifically charged with examining:

- ◆ the continued wide-spread acceptance of the plan
  - ◆ the culture of planning and review that indicates that the institution has been critical and reflective about its progress
- The projected ability of the institution to meet its accreditation obligations within the cycle

The Mid-Point Reviewer to Clinton Junior-Senior High School spent eight hours discussing the current status of the institution's *AFG* plan with staff, administrators, and students. Although the visit was brief, the Reviewer interacted with over sixty individuals who were able to convey the

commitment of the institution to its strategic plan and the role it plays in the life of the institution.

## **II. Context of the Institution**

Clinton Junior-Senior High School is a large suburban institution of approximately 1650 students located in a modest middle class neighborhood in northeastern Pennsylvania. The product of two merged institutions eight years ago, Clinton High serves a diverse population of 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Housed in a thoroughly modernized structure of six distinct buildings, the school has physically separated the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades into a middle school environment while recognizing the older students with their own facility. One of the buildings also houses the district offices of the superintendent and her staff. This change was made the year after the Validation Team visited.

The administration, a closely-knit group of professionals, is lead by a principal for each division. The faculty, numbering 85 FTE, is reflective of the ethnic and religious diversity found within the student body. Since the last team visit, the rate of faculty turnover has slowed considerably – from a high of 42% four years ago to 11% last year. Support for the professional development of the faculty is strong, and the collegiality among members of each department is noteworthy. As a result of the *AFG* plan, the formality of design for the professional development program has grown. Teachers now have much more input in the activities, and most are centered on some aspect noted in the student performance objectives.

The school enjoys an understandably highly positive reputation within the community. The athletic teams are by and large successful, with state level championship competition repeatedly seen by the varsity lacrosse, baseball, field hockey, and softball teams. This success also aids many students in their plans to continue their education at the university level. Over 80% of the student body matriculates to college upon graduation. A strong academic program of college preparatory course offerings supports this profile. Advanced Placement programs are offered in all core subject areas with 8 different courses – 3 more than when the Validation Team was last on campus. The average combined SAT scores have ranged in the mid-1100s for the past three years, but are slowly climbing. Teachers are supportive of the academic success of their students and can often be found providing additional help before and after classes.

Competition for resources has always been an issue for Clinton High. Enrollment has declined recently by 20-30 students a year and projections indicate that trend will continue. The sudden departure of Johns Chemicals, one of the major industries in the district, two years ago has also adversely affected the tax base from which the school draws revenue. Innovative partnerships with nearby businesses have provided the school with much of the financing for its initiatives. The strong community support has also allowed the school to continue its strong academic and athletic programming.

## **III. Mid-Point Review Checklist**

The Mid-Point Reviewer examined evidence that:

COMPONENT	Limited / No Evidence	Sufficient / Some Evidence	Satisfactory Evidence	Exceptional Evidence
<b>Planning</b>				
A committee or team representative of the school’s stakeholders continues to oversee, review, and make decisions about the strategic plan for school improvement.			✓	
Key individual(s) are in place to ensure the continuing nature of the process, and are successful in fostering that culture.			✓	
Documentation exists that illustrates how the plan has been reviewed at least annually.		✓		
A general understanding of the planning process and plan is found among the members of the school community.		✓		
<p><b>SUMMARY:</b></p> <p><b>Is there a viable internal monitoring process that has put an accountability system in place for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plans? What evidence or observations lead you to this conclusion? If the answer is no, what must the school do in the remaining years to fulfill this parameter of the protocol?</b></p> <p>Annual review documentation was uneven from one objective to the next. The Planning Team, a viable group that meets at least once a term, has not received adequate feedback from each Implementation Team. There is a distinct lack of focus and leadership in the Communications Objective since the departure of the chief advocate and chair of the Implementation Team. Nonetheless, there is still great interest among the community at large in moving forward in this area. The school will need to redouble its efforts to clarify the importance of data collection on measures and review of progress on action plans.</p> <p><b>Has the annual review process provided continuous evaluation and a dynamic process that shows flexibility in modifying action plans? What evidence or observations lead you to this conclusion? If the answer is no, what must the school do in the remaining years to fulfill this parameter of the protocol?</b></p> <p>For the most part, the annual review process has enabled the school to evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives and to provide focus for the coming year. Action plans have been adjusted somewhat, but the school could benefit from new thinking that might arise from inclusion of new members of the school community – both faculty and students, in particular.</p>				

COMPONENT	Limited / No Evidence	Sufficient / Some Evidence	Satisfactory Evidence	Exceptional Evidence
<b><i>Content of Plan</i></b>				
Growth in student performance as shown by the measurable student performance objectives is evident, or the school community can identify why growth did not occur and has adjusted the action plans to produce the desired growth in the latter half of the 5-year cycle.			✓	
The objectives remain the primary focus for improvement in student performance with significant changes to the objectives occurring only after consultation with Middle States staff.			✓	
Action plans have been updated to reflect more detail in the latter half of the 5-year cycle.		✓		
<p><b>SUMMARY:</b></p> <p><b>Are school improvement efforts aimed at student learning, student performance, and student results? What evidence or observations lead you to this conclusion? If the answer is no, what must the school do in the remaining years to fulfill this parameter of the protocol?</b></p> <p>Clinton has demonstrated viable growth in two of its three measures with data identified as measures for each of the objectives. Overall the school remains committed to all three student performance objectives and is seeking further improvement in them all.</p>				
<b><i>Organizational Growth</i></b>				
The school is using data to inform its decision making regarding its plan for school improvement.		✓		
Appropriate changes to membership of committees have been made to reflect changes in school's structure, personnel, etc.		✓		
The school has committed the resources (human, monetary, etc.) necessary for successful implementation of the plan.			✓	
The planning process, as well as the plan, is evaluated each year.		✓		

COMPONENT	Limited / No Evidence	Sufficient / Some Evidence	Satisfactory Evidence	Exceptional Evidence
<p><b>SUMMARY:</b></p> <p><b>Is a culture of planning evident as shown by the development of long-term strategic action plans that integrate program, services, facilities, and support to address growth needs? What evidence or observations lead you to this conclusion? If the answer is no, what must the school do in the remaining years to fulfill this parameter of the protocol?</b></p> <p>The focus of much of the updated plans has centered on what needs to be done in the upcoming year, rather than in long-term strategic thinking. Also the school has overlooked a rich area of contribution in terms of how parents and other community members can become more involved in improving student performance, especially in the area of Citizenship. Perhaps a discussion session at the next PTO meeting or a questionnaire to parents might elicit some new thinking on how to improve student performance in this area.</p> <p><b>Is there a climate of inclusiveness with evidence of continued involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the planning process? What evidence or observations lead you to this conclusion? If the answer is no, what must the school do in the remaining years to fulfill this parameter of the protocol?</b></p> <p>The Planning Team has been “restocked” with new community members to replace those whose direct ties with the school have ended. The equity of membership is still reflective of the general stakeholder population. The school may wish to revisit its process for ensuring continuity for the Implementation Teams, however.</p>				

**IV. Mid-Point Review Objectives Narrative Review**

In the spring of 2000, a four-person AFG Validation Team visited Clinton Junior-Senior High School as representatives from the Middle States Association. The Team reported a successful process in place for planning and congratulated the school on developing three objectives that were in keeping with the mission and beliefs of the school. The student performance indicators included citizenship, technological proficiency, and oral communication skills. As part of their process the school instituted both Action Plan Teams and Implementation Teams to enable the school to reach its objectives. The Reviewer found positive growth in the measurement of two of the three objectives.

The first objective was originally submitted as follows:

*By 2005, Clinton High students will demonstrate an increased awareness of their role as contributing citizens in community affairs as measured by a 10% increase in the number of students who participate in an approved community service activity.*

*Baseline: 1999-00  
286 students participated in an approved community service activity*

The annual review process completed by the Planning Team in conjunction with the Action Plan and Implementation Teams show that the school now has 348 students participating in community service – a 22% increase! Confident that the figure reflects a steady, growing commitment on the part of the student body rather than a temporary increase, the three teams have decided that their action plans were indeed successful and plan to continue them over the next two years. As one student on the Action Plan Team put it, “We knew we were on the right track, and the numbers prove it. I want to see if we can push the numbers even higher!” One of the teachers from the Implementation Team remarked, “The focus of this objective provided the support from the administration to increase awareness and accessibility to opportunities within our community. What a wonderfully positive experience this has been.” It was clear to the Reviewer that the school has met and even exceeded the goal of this objective. The enthusiasm for it has not waned, and in all likelihood the Validation Team that visits this school in 2007 will see even greater growth. The school is to be congratulated on its success and is encouraged to seek ways to celebrate that success.

The second objective was originally submitted as follows:

***By 2005, 95% of Clinton High seniors will demonstrate a high level of technological proficiency as measured by a satisfactory rating on the Clinton Technology Rubric.***

***Baseline: 1999-00***

***78% of seniors scored a “satisfactory” on the Clinton Technology Rubric***

The annual review process conducted by the Planning Team in conjunction with the Action Plan Team and Implementation Team revealed that currently 82% of the seniors score a “satisfactory” on the Clinton Technology Rubric. Although the success rate on this objective is not as dramatic as that of the first objective, the team members were encouraged by the progress found here. “We’re looking for something more here than basic knowledge of computers – more than the ability to chat online or type a term paper, and that requires students to reach a little. It requires our teachers to reach *a lot*. The process is slow, but we’re moving in the right direction,” said a member of the Planning Team. The Action Plan Team revised the timelines of some of its plans as a result of the feedback it received from the teachers. For instance, there is a greater perceived need to speed up staff development plans for incorporating technology within the curriculum. The team is also considering a plan to develop a Technology Committee with heavy student involvement, C<sup>3</sup> (Clinton’s Computer Commandos) to encourage technology use outside the classroom in some of the extra-curricular activities. The Reviewer found that growth is evident in this objective and that appropriate modifications to the action plans have been addressed.

The third objective was originally submitted as follows:

***By 2005, Clinton students will demonstrate improved oral communication skills as evidenced by:***

- 1) a 15% increase in the number of students who participate in the one of the following groups: Debate Club, Theater Group, or Model UN***

***Baseline: 1999-00***

***65 students participate in one of the three groups***

- 2) a 95% success rate in completion of the oral presentation portion of the senior project***

***Baseline: 2000-01***

***\_\_\_% of students successfully complete the oral presentation***

### *of the senior project*

NOTE: The senior project was introduced in the 2000-01 school year and baseline data was not available for the Validation Team Visit.

The annual review process conducted by the Planning Team in conjunction with the Action Plan Team and Implementation Team revealed that currently 62 students participate in one of the three extra-curricular groups that involve public speaking and that 89% of the students successfully complete the oral presentation portion of the senior project. Dismay was evident in the meetings that focused on this objective for not only has there been a decrease in the totals in the first measurement tool, but the 2000 figures for the second measurement tool began at 92% and are also declining. When one of the Planning Team members said, “We never should have added this objective. We only needed two. Now our accreditation is in danger,” the Reviewer found the sentiment echoed by other members of the Planning Team. The Action Plan and Implementation Teams, however, espoused a slightly different view. “We know that we haven’t done as well as we hoped, but the focus over the last two years has been on community service and technology. Perhaps now we can talk about public speaking as a skill that needs to be integrated into the curriculum instead of computer-this and computer-that,” said a teacher on the Action Plan Team. The students were noticeably and ironically quiet during the meetings that focused on this objective. “We’ve tried to recruit more students,” said another teacher, “It’s just that there’s only so much pie to share, and with all the kids getting involved in community service, they don’t have time to act in the plays or prepare for debates.”

The Reviewer found that the concept of improving oral communication skills was still viable throughout the school and encourages the Planning Team to redouble its efforts to reestablish it as a priority for the school. It is important for the school and for the accreditation process that this objective be enlivened with new ideas, new plans, and refocus as one of three objectives in a five year plan. By the same token, stakeholders in this specific objective should recognize that growth needs to be evidenced over the course of five years and should not “lose heart” over a small decline. Visiting other schools with a similar objective, combining efforts with those of community service planners (children’s plays for the community, for instance), and targeting appropriate areas in the curriculum where oral presentations can be incorporated are but a few ideas that may put this objective back on the right track.

## **V. Concluding Comments**

The Reviewer sees evidence of a continuous planning culture at Clinton Junior-Senior High School. The plan is alive and well, and although specific growth in one area is not apparent, overall the school is showing forward momentum and has the wherewithal to prove growth in its student performance objectives. The Reviewer clearly recommends that the Commission on Secondary Schools continue Clinton High’s accreditation.

# ***EXHIBIT 4***

## **Re-Accreditation Rubric**

Institutions and Reviewers may find the following rubric useful in determining appropriate progress in each of the areas of the protocol parameters. While institutions applying for re-accreditation with either the *AFG* or *VTV* protocols will be asked to reflect on their progress on each of these items, the rubric is provided at the Mid-Point Review stage only as a guide for those who are seeking clarification on the different possible responses in the Mid-Point Review Checklist of the Mid-Point Review report.

## ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH RE-ACCREDITATION RUBRIC

### PLANNING PROCESSES

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
<b>School Profile/Context of the School</b>	<p>The context of the school is missing key information. It is disorganized and in places unclear or contradictory.</p> <p>Some facts and figures are presented. Limited attention is given to the role of the school in the community. The profile lacks “personal feeling” or pride in the school.</p>	<p>The context of the school includes all of the necessary components, but may lack some descriptive richness. The <i>AFG</i> school improvement efforts are described, but the relationship to district, local, state, or national activities may not be outlined.</p> <p>The context tends to focus on facts and figures. There is some information on student performance.</p>	<p>The context of the school is described well and provides a good sense of the school and the community it serves. The framework for school improvement activities is outlined.</p> <p>The context includes relevant facts, information on student performance, and identifies some key trends and future challenges.</p>	<p>The profile “paints a vivid picture” of the school community and the reader can identify the distinctive personality and ethos of the school. The context within which improvement activities are taking place is clearly identified.</p> <p>The context uses rich, descriptive language to describe the history of the school and its traditions. Geographic location and salient characteristics of the school and community are effectively communicated. Student performance levels are summarized via both qualitative and quantitative data. Financial data and information on school and community resources are provided. Key trends or changes that are occurring in the school community give the reader an understanding of any significant challenges to progress the school may face.</p>
<b>Planning Team Composition</b>	<p>The desired characteristics and composition of the Planning Team are not known or are not formally structured.</p> <p>The Planning Team is comprised of those willing to volunteer, “the same old group,” or whoever is available.</p>	<p>The administration outlines the makeup of the Planning Team.</p> <p>The Planning Team is comprised of staff and administration.</p> <p>Some attention is given to other characteristics of diversity in the Planning Team membership.</p> <p>Informal records are kept of the</p>	<p>Staff and administration participate in the discussion and identification of the Planning Team.</p> <p>The Planning Team includes primarily staff and administration with some parent and student representation.</p> <p>Good attention is given to other characteristics to ensure the</p>	<p>School community members actively participate in the identification of the desired characteristics of Planning Team membership.</p> <p>A diverse variety of constituencies are represented on the Planning Team, including governing body members, staff, administration, parents, students, alumni, senior citizens, business partners, and community members.</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>Limited attention is given to other diverse characteristics of the Planning Team members.</p> <p>No consistent process for selecting or maintaining Planning Team membership is in place.</p>	<p>desired characteristics of Planning Team membership.</p> <p>An informal process for selecting and maintaining Planning Team membership is in place.</p>	<p>diversity and representativeness of the Planning Team.</p> <p>A formal record is kept of Planning Team qualities and care is taken when filling positions on the Team to ensure that diversity is maintained.</p> <p>A formal, well-understood process for selecting and maintaining Planning Team membership is in place.</p>	<p>Full consideration is given to other diverse characteristics such as years of involvement with the school, viewpoint, gender, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic background.</p> <p>About one-half of the Planning Team is comprised of school staff members. The remainder represents other constituencies.</p> <p>The school effectively utilizes a grid or matrix to outline critical characteristics and constituencies, thus ensuring that the Planning Team maintains the desired composition.</p> <p>A clear, accepted, easily understood, and well-publicized process for selection of Planning Team members is in place.</p>
<b>Planning Team Operation</b>	<p>Little or no effort is made to encourage collaboration or to involve diverse stakeholder groups in the planning process.</p> <p>No ground rules for Planning Team operation exist.</p> <p>No succession/transition plan is in place. Planning Team members are unsure of how long they will serve. Other members of the school community are unaware of how they might volunteer their service to the Planning Team.</p> <p>No plans are in place for the recognition of successes.</p>	<p>An established planning process includes teachers and administration. Limited attempts are made to involve parents, students, or other members of the community in planning efforts.</p> <p>Ground rules for Planning Team operation are cited by Team members, but they are informal and not written down.</p> <p>Ideas are discussed by the Planning Team on replacement of members, but terms of office may not exist and a formalized succession plan is not written down.</p> <p>Successes are occasionally recognized, but not in a formal</p>	<p>A consensus-building planning process is established that allows school personnel and other selected school community members to participate in planning activities.</p> <p>Written ground rules for operation exist and provide guidance to the smooth running of the Planning Team.</p> <p>A succession plan is in place and formalized.</p> <p>Successes are frequently honored and celebrated, in both informal and formal ways.</p> <p>The ongoing role of the Planning Team is well-understood by the all</p>	<p>A collaborative, consensus-building planning process enables a wide range of stakeholders to effectively work together as a learning community.</p> <p>A clear set of ground rules exists to deal with issues such as consensus vs. majority rule, Planning Team leadership, how new ideas are integrated into the plans, and quorum rules. Planning Team members indicate the ground rules are effectively used and supported by all Team members.</p> <p>An effective publicized succession plan is in place to enable individuals to transition smoothly on and off the Planning Team.</p> <p>The Planning Team takes time to pause and celebrate its successes, as well as engage the full school community in</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>Planning Team members do not see their role as an ongoing one. No job description is in place and there is a lack of clarity on the authority or relationship of the Planning Team to other systems in the school.</p> <p>No orientation to the school's AFG plan and processes is provided to those new to the school community.</p> <p>The Planning Team does not monitor or evaluate its effectiveness.</p>	<p>way.</p> <p>The role of the Planning Team is well-understood by some members of the Team and other school community members. The role of the Team and its authority is discussed in informal ways, but is not written down.</p> <p>The Planning Team gives some attention to the orientation of new staff and administration to the school's AFG plan and processes.</p> <p>The Planning Team informally assesses its own effectiveness in rudimentary ways.</p>	<p>members of the Team, but is less well-understood by members of the school community it serves. A written job description is available. The levels and limits of the Planning Team's authority are understood.</p> <p>The Planning Team provides regular orientation to the school's AFG plan to some of the following groups: new staff, governing body members, parents, and students.</p> <p>The Planning Team occasionally evaluates its own effectiveness mainly through candid discussions.</p>	<p>appreciation of the school's efforts.</p> <p>The ongoing role of the Planning Team is well-understood by the members of the Team as well as the school community it serves. A clear written job description is in place and publicized. The levels and limits of the Planning Team's authority are clearly communicated.</p> <p>The Planning Team assures that effective and regular orientation to the school's AFG plan and processes is provided to new staff, governing body members, parents, and students.</p> <p>The Planning Team actively monitors and evaluates its own effectiveness through candid discussions, feedback surveys, and input from the school community.</p>
<b>Role of Internal Coordinator(s)</b>	<p>The role of the Internal Coordinator(s) is unclear to the individual(s) as well as to others in the school community.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) demonstrates a lack of knowledge in a number of areas, including planning processes. S/he may express the feeling that "I don't know what I am supposed to do."</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) has not organized the work and can not adequately meet the demands of the job.</p>	<p>The role of the Internal Coordinator(s) is understood by the individual(s) serving in the role, but the rest of the school community may express lack of clarity/concern about the role. An informal job description is in place, but may not be written. The authority of the Internal Coordinator(s) is discussed in informal ways, but is not written down.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) demonstrates a good understanding of planning processes. S/he may express the desire for more knowledge in areas such as group process skills and student</p>	<p>The ongoing role of the Internal Coordinator(s) is well-understood by the individual(s) serving in the role, but may be less well-understood by other members of the school community s/he serves. A written job description is in place. The levels and limits of the Internal Coordinator(s)'s authority are understood.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) demonstrates a good understanding of strategic planning, group process skills, and student assessment, especially alternative and authentic assessment tools.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) is</p>	<p>The ongoing role of the Internal Coordinator(s) is well-understood by the individual(s) serving in the role as well as the school community s/he serves. A clear written job description is in place and publicized. The levels and limits of the Internal Coordinator(s)'s authority are clearly communicated.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) demonstrates a solid understanding of strategic planning, group process skills, and student assessment, especially alternative and authentic assessment tools.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) is well-organized, well-respected in the school community, and effective in the job role as defined. S/he handles the role with</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>The Internal Coordinator(s) does not provide regular updates.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) is not in regular contact with the Middle States Association or the resources it offers.</p>	<p>assessment, especially alternative and authentic assessment tools.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) informally organizes the work and adequately addresses the demands of the job.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) informally updates the administration and staff on the <i>AFG</i> process.</p> <p>To some degree, the Internal Coordinator(s) is a liaison to the Middle States Association.</p>	<p>organized and is respected in the school community. S/he is effective in the job role as defined.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) keeps the administration and staff informed on the progress being made.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) is an effective liaison to the Middle States Association, keeping abreast of the latest developments in the <i>AFG</i> protocol and taking advantage of the resources offered by MSA.</p>	<p>energy, enthusiasm, and positive “can-do” attitude.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) keeps the administration, governing body, staff, and other members of the school community well-informed on the progress being made. S/he actively finds solutions to address barriers to maximal progress.</p> <p>The Internal Coordinator(s) is an effective liaison to the Middle States Association, keeping abreast of the latest developments in the <i>AFG</i> protocol and taking advantage of the resources offered by MSA. S/he networks with other <i>AFG</i> schools to learn from others and actively seeks out opportunities to serve on <i>AFG</i> Validation Team visits to other schools.</p>
<b>Role of Governing Body</b>	<p>The governing body is not involved with the <i>AFG</i> process and is unaware of the school’s improvement activities.</p> <p>The governing body does not use the <i>AFG</i> plan as a criterion for policy or resource decisions.</p>	<p>The governing body supports the school’s improvement efforts through the provision of resources, but is not a regular member of the Planning Team.</p> <p>The governing body considers the contents of the <i>AFG</i> plan when making its financial, resource, and policy decisions.</p>	<p>The governing body provides endorsement of the school’s improvement efforts through the provision of resources. It listens attentively to updates by the Planning Team and/or Action Plan/Implementation Teams.</p> <p>The governing body participates in planning efforts via the Planning Team.</p> <p>The governing body uses the contents of the <i>AFG</i> plan as an important criterion when making its financial and resource decisions. Policy decisions by the governing body support the plan’s implementation.</p>	<p>The governing body provides official approval and ongoing endorsement of the school’s improvement efforts through the provision of needed resources and verbal support. It asks for and responds to regular updates by the Planning Team and/or Action Plan/Implementation Teams.</p> <p>The governing body ensures that it is a full partner in planning efforts by active participation on Planning and Action Plan/Implementation Teams, as appropriate. Through its participation, it ensures coherence and consistency with the school’s/district’s overall strategic direction.</p> <p>Wherever possible, the governing body</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
				bases its financial and resource decisions on the contents of the plan, ensuring that the “plan drives the budget.” Policy decisions by the governing body effectively support the plan’s implementation.
<b>Role of Administration</b>	<p>The administration participates in a limited way in the school’s planning efforts.</p> <p>The administration does not actively provide time, resources, or support to planning and implementation activities.</p>	<p>The administration participates in the school’s planning efforts.</p> <p>The administration, especially the school head, assists in providing the necessary time, resources, and support to planning and implementation activities. The <i>AFG</i> plan serves as a criterion in resource allocation decisions.</p>	<p>The administration is an active and equal participant in the school’s planning efforts.</p> <p>The administration assists in providing the necessary time, resources, and support to planning and implementation activities.</p> <p>The school head commits resources to the implementation of action plans.</p>	<p>The administration is both a leader and an equal participant in the school’s planning efforts.</p> <p>The school head, in particular, sets an effective tone and climate for planning and demonstrates how seriously the school takes the action plans by committing resources to the implementation of action plans</p> <p>The administration ensures that necessary time, resources, and support are provided for effective planning and implementation activities.</p>
<b>Communication and Awareness Activities</b>	<p>A limited plan for informing and involving stakeholders has been developed.</p> <p>Few communication tools are used.</p> <p>Limited stakeholder feedback on various aspects of the plan is obtained.</p> <p>Few constituencies demonstrate an understanding of or support for the <i>AFG</i> plan and the planning process.</p> <p>There is no evidence that communication efforts are</p>	<p>An informal plan is in place to ensure that stakeholders are informed and involved in <i>AFG</i> planning activities</p> <p>Some variety of communication tools is used, but mainly include newsletters and discussions.</p> <p>The school conducts informal surveys and/or discussions to obtain stakeholder feedback on various aspects of the plan.</p> <p>Some constituencies demonstrate good understanding and support for the <i>AFG</i> plan and the planning process.</p>	<p>A clear plan is in place to ensure that stakeholders are informed and involved in <i>AFG</i> planning activities.</p> <p>A good variety of communication tools is used including newsletters, webpages, discussion groups, and surveys.</p> <p>The school conducts surveys and/or discussions to obtain stakeholder feedback on various aspects of the plan.</p> <p>Most constituencies demonstrate good understanding and support for the <i>AFG</i> plan and the planning process.</p>	<p>A clear, well-articulated plan is in place to ensure that stakeholders are informed, involved, and can provide input into the <i>AFG</i> plan.</p> <p>A wide variety of communication tools is used including newsletters, webpages, face-to-face forums, discussion groups, surveys, videos, and the media to effectively communicate the “school’s message.”</p> <p>The school conducts regular surveys and/or discussions to obtain stakeholder perspectives on the focus of the mission and beliefs, the importance of the objectives, and the effectiveness of the action plans. New ideas are actively</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	ongoing or sustained, two-way or dynamic. Most communication efforts are “one-shot” and “one-way.”	There is some evidence that some communication efforts are ongoing and sustained, two-way and dynamic.	Evidence exists that communication efforts are ongoing and sustained, two-way and dynamic.	solicited from the school community.  All school constituencies demonstrate solid understanding and active support for the AFG plan and the planning process.  Considerable evidence exists that communication efforts are ongoing and sustained, two-way and dynamic. An effective feedback loop is in place; feedback is collected from representatives of the school community and information on how that feedback was used to influence decisions is reported back to those same stakeholders.
<b>Action Plan/ Implementation Teams (if they exist)</b>	<p>Many members of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams do not see their role as an ongoing one. No job description is in place and there is a lack of clarity on the authority or relationship of the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams to other systems in the school.</p> <p>The Action Plan/ Implementation Teams are comprised of those willing to volunteer, “the same old group,” or whomever is available.</p> <p>Limited attention is given to other diverse characteristics of the Action Plan/ Implementation Team members.</p> <p>Limited communication exists</p>	<p>The role of the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams is understood by some Team members and selected individuals in the school community. The role of the Teams and their authority is discussed in informal ways, but is not written down.</p> <p>The Action Plan/ Implementation Teams are comprised of staff and administration.</p> <p>Some attention is given to other characteristics of diversity on the Teams.</p> <p>Informal communication exists between the Planning Team and the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams.</p> <p>Action Plan/Implementation Teams are of an appropriate size.</p>	<p>The ongoing role of the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams is well-understood by the members of the Teams, but is less well-understood by the broader school community it serves. A written job description is available. The levels and limits of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams’ authority are understood.</p> <p>Action Plan/ Implementation Teams include primarily staff and administration with some other constituencies represented. Good attention is given to other characteristics to ensure the diversity and representativeness of the Teams.</p> <p>Systematic communication exists between the Planning Team and the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams.</p>	<p>The ongoing role of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams is well-understood by the members of the Teams as well as the school community they serve. A clear written job description is in place and publicized. The levels and limits of the Teams’ authority are clearly communicated, especially in such areas as the relationship to the Planning Team and whether action plans can be modified by the Action Plan/Implementation Teams.</p> <p>Action Plan/Implementation Teams are diverse in composition (as appropriate), including representatives of different grade levels and content disciplines along with other characteristics considered for Planning Team membership. Team members exhibit particular interest and expertise in the action plan areas in which they are working.</p> <p>A shared vision and effective, ongoing communication exists between the</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>between the Planning Team and the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams.</p> <p>Action Plan/ Implementation Teams may be either too large or too small (relative to size of the school) to be effective. The school community is unaware of the work of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams or does not agree with it.</p>	<p>The work of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams is accepted.</p>	<p>Action Plan/ Implementation Teams are of an appropriate size (relative to size of the school) to ensure their efficacy.</p> <p>The work of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams is collegial, open, and well-accepted.</p>	<p>Planning Team and the Action Plan/ Implementation Teams.</p> <p>Action Plan/Implementation Teams are of an appropriate size (relative to size of the school) to ensure their efficacy, to allow for effective and thoughtful participation by stakeholders, and to encourage broad-based ownership in the plans. The Teams provide effective leadership in ensuring that plans are implemented.</p> <p>The work of the Action Plan/Implementation Teams results in positive feelings of collegiality, camaraderie, and a sense that “this is <b>our</b> plan.”</p>
<b>Annual Review Process</b>	<p>No systematic annual review process is in place.</p>	<p>A process for reviewing, evaluating, and updating action plans and reviewing progress toward achieving student performance objectives has been considered, but has not been formally defined.</p> <p>Informal, but regular reviews are planned and conducted. Agendas are developed.</p> <p>The review process is conducted annually.</p> <p>Information to be reviewed includes student performance data related to the <i>AFG</i> objectives. A review of action steps is conducted.</p> <p>An “attitude of continuous</p>	<p>A defined process for reviewing, evaluating, and updating action plans and reviewing progress toward achieving student performance objectives is in place.</p> <p>Regular reviews are planned and agendas are developed. The input of stakeholders is sought.</p> <p>The review process is conducted at least annually with informal quarterly or bi-yearly updates.</p> <p>Information to be reviewed includes student performance data related to the <i>AFG</i> objectives. An indepth review of action steps is conducted and indicators of success are highlighted.</p> <p>An “attitude of continuous</p>	<p>A clearly defined, well-publicized process for reviewing, evaluating, and updating action plans and reviewing progress toward achieving student performance objectives is in place and adhered to.</p> <p>Reviews are planned well in advance and placed on the school calendar. Effective agendas for reviews are developed and the input of stakeholders is actively sought.</p> <p>The review process is conducted at least annually with quarterly or bi-yearly updates and meaningful checkpoints utilized throughout the year.</p> <p>Information to be reviewed includes quantitative and qualitative student performance data as well as review of action steps accomplished and with what results. Stakeholder perceptions, reviews</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
		improvement” is demonstrated.	improvement” is demonstrated throughout the school.	<p>of school processes, and changing demographics provide important considerations.</p> <p>An “attitude of continuous improvement” is clearly demonstrated throughout the school. The review process is perceived as an opportunity to ensure that action plans are “evergreen,” dynamic, and responsive to student learning needs.</p>
<b>Data Management Processes</b>	<p>Little or no evidence exists that a data collection or management system is in place.</p> <p>Data are generally collected only when a problem arises.</p> <p>Limited data analysis or interpretation takes place.</p> <p>Relevant educational research is not examined. Limited efforts are made to examine local, state, or national expectations for student performance.</p> <p>The school community says it feels “overwhelmed” by the amount of data and information to be reviewed.</p> <p>Limited efforts are made to communicate data on student performance to stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>A rudimentary data collection and management system is in place.</p> <p>The school has ideas of the types of data it wishes to collect and analyze, but it does not yet have a formalized process in place. An insufficient amount of information is available in one or more key areas.</p> <p>Little disaggregation or data analysis is conducted, although there is a demonstrated understanding of the need to do so.</p> <p>A rudimentary review of educational research and anticipated curriculum trends is conducted. The <i>AFG</i> objectives are broadly related to local, state, and national expectations for student performance.</p> <p>Some analyses of data are superficial.</p> <p>Communication of the analysis of the data is provided to stakeholders</p>	<p>Evidence exists of a data collection process and a means for monitoring data related to the objectives and action plans. Data collected provide an accurate picture of current student performance.</p> <p>Some data are disaggregated for analysis purposes, but not all aspects of data collection and analysis are fully operational.</p> <p>A partial review of relevant educational research and the recommendations of national curriculum organizations is conducted. In designing <i>AFG</i> objectives, some consideration is given to current local, state, and national expectations for student performance.</p> <p>Some evidence exists of longitudinal analysis of trends.</p> <p>The school is beginning to interpret and integrate data in systematic ways that assist the school in identifying school improvement</p>	<p>A well-designed, comprehensive process for collecting and monitoring data related to the objectives and action plan implementation is employed.</p> <p>Data are collected for appropriate subgroups and disaggregated for analysis purposes. The relationships between different categories of data are systematically explored.</p> <p>A comprehensive review of relevant educational research and the recommendations of national curriculum organizations is conducted. In designing <i>AFG</i> objectives, full consideration is given to current local, state, and national expectations for student performance.</p> <p>The school regularly collects and analyzes longitudinal data. Follow-up studies of graduates and those leaving the school are conducted.</p> <p>Much evidence exists of data-driven decision-making. The school community sees information as the key to informed and effective decision-making and to anticipating future challenges.</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
		on a limited basis. Summaries may be confusing or perceived to be “education jargon” to non-educators.	priorities.  Some data are communicated in effective ways, although not always in a systematic way. A variety of forms of communication is used.	Data are interpreted and effectively communicated to stakeholders. Summaries of data are presented in ways (such as executive summaries, graphic organizers, annual reports) that are easily understood by different constituent groups.

## **CONTENT OF PLAN**

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
<b>Mission Components</b>	<p>The mission is missing three or more of the five elements.</p> <p>It is difficult to discern the primary priorities outlined in the mission.</p> <p>Student learning is alluded to, but not clearly identified as the mission of the school.</p>	<p>The mission is missing <i>identity</i> and <i>function</i> and/or one of the first three elements (<i>audience, action, aim</i>) is not clearly identifiable or is confusing.</p> <p>The mission describes multiple priorities of the school, among which student learning is one.</p>	<p>The mission includes <i>audience, action,</i> and <i>aim</i>, but is missing one of the last two elements (<i>identity, function</i>).</p> <p>The primary focus of the mission is on students and their learning.</p>	<p>The mission clearly identifies what the school is and what it is striving to become. Student performance and student learning are identified as the top priorities.</p> <p>The statement includes the following five components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>audience</i> (whom the school serves or should serve),</li> <li>• <i>action</i> (what the school does or should do—the “verb”),</li> <li>• <i>aim</i> (the current or desired purpose for its existence),</li> <li>• <i>identity</i> (a special unique characteristic or the school’s one-of-a-kindness) and</li> <li>• <i>function</i> (general means for meeting its <i>aim</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Mission Tone and Format</b>	<p>The mission leaves the reader with a sense of “so what?”</p> <p>The statement is not written clearly and is difficult to</p>	<p>The mission could describe any school and is not particularly distinctive.</p> <p>The mission addresses important</p>	<p>The mission is idealistic without including cliches.</p> <p>The school is beginning to understand the commitments made in the mission.</p>	<p>The mission promotes an emotion of excellence and requires the school to “stretch.” It is inspiring and makes the reader want to be a part of the school community.</p>

<b><i>The school can provide.....</i></b>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>understand.</p> <p>The statement is either a slogan (too short) or a lengthy statement of philosophy (too long).</p>	<p>concepts, but is awkwardly stated and difficult to understand.</p> <p>The mission is long and extends to page in length.</p>	<p>The mission is clear and concise and expresses an important purpose and direction for the school.</p>	<p>The statement is outcome-based and its implications for daily practice and decision-making are compelling. It is rich in imagery and expresses a “call to action.”</p> <p>The mission is clear and concise. Each word in the mission is meaningful and communicates a critical concept or sense of the school.</p> <p>The mission acknowledges the current status of the school but also identifies and aspires to the ideal. It reflects the vision of the school community.</p>
<b>Beliefs</b>	<p>Beliefs have not yet been developed or do not address issues related to the school community’s value system.</p>	<p>Some of the statements express the values of the community. The beliefs tend to be focused on just educational issues.</p> <p>Some of the beliefs are difficult to understand or interpret in practice.</p> <p>The school community has given limited consideration to the implications of the beliefs for daily practice or decision-making.</p> <p>Many of the beliefs read as bland platitudes without genuine value judgments indicated.</p> <p>The beliefs are overly prescriptive and include things the school “must” or “should” do, rather than what it believes.</p> <p>There are too many statements or</p>	<p>The beliefs address major issues pertinent to effective decision-making and the operation of the school.</p> <p>Beliefs appear to be aligned with mission and objectives.</p> <p>Many statements are well-articulated and thoughtful.</p> <p>There is good evidence of efforts to communicate the beliefs to stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>The beliefs are comprehensive. They declare universally held, deeply felt convictions about fundamental values and are not just focused on educational issues They represent the school’s ethical code or moral compass. They clearly outline what the school community is willing to defend.</p> <p>The beliefs clearly communicate “matters of faith”, not “matters of fact.”</p> <p>The statements are precise, clearly articulated, free of jargon, simply formatted, and fully communicated to stakeholder groups. The school community understands fully what the beliefs commit the school to do and to be</p> <p>The beliefs are inspiring and empowering. They “give the reader</p>

<b><i>The school can provide.....</i></b>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
		too few.		<p>goosebumps” and encourage individuals and the organization to aspire to the ideal.</p> <p>Evidence exists that the beliefs are used as an effective lens to examine the worthiness of potential decisions or future actions.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Little or no effort has been made to ensure alignment of the objectives with the school’s mission and beliefs.</p> <p>The <i>AFG</i> objectives are vague, unfocused, or too narrow/too global.</p> <p>The stated objectives are not measurable, and indicators of performance are not clearly identified. Principles of good assessment have not been considered.</p> <p>Growth targets are not set or are unclear.</p> <p>No baseline data are available or the data are unclear or outdated.</p>	<p>Some effort has been made to ensure alignment of the objectives with the school’s mission and beliefs.</p> <p>The <i>AFG</i> objectives are identified, but are not sufficiently challenging or inspiring.</p> <p>The stated objectives are measurable by some assessment tools, but these need to be expanded or improved. Assessment tools tend to be those that are standardized. Indicators of performance are identified, but need to be more fully defined.</p> <p>The school is beginning to develop an overall assessment plan based on principles of good assessment practice.</p> <p>The targets for expected student growth are set at either unrealistically high or uninspiringly low levels.</p> <p>Baseline data are indicated and gives a sense of how student currently perform.</p>	<p>Solid efforts to align <i>AFG</i> objectives with the school’s mission and beliefs are evident.</p> <p>The <i>AFG</i> objectives are clearly stated. The focus of the objectives tends to be more narrowly focused. The school has given some consideration to both academic and non-academic areas and expresses the desire to educate the “whole child.”</p> <p>Good attention has been given to a variety of standardized and internally-designed assessment tools. Performance indicators have been identified, and principles of sound assessment are in evidence.</p> <p>Targets for student growth have been established and will make the school “stretch” to achieve them.</p> <p>Solid base line data are provided and is reviewed as a part of the planning process.</p>	<p>The <i>AFG</i> objectives focus on critical areas of student performance, including academic, social, interpersonal, and spiritual (where appropriate) areas. The objectives emphasize meaningful interdisciplinary connections between skills, attitudes, and content disciplines.</p> <p>The objectives are measurable by multiple quantitative and qualitative performance measures. Performance-based indicators clearly define the evidence of student growth that is collected and analyzed. The assessment plans model the principles of sound assessment.</p> <p>Rigorous targets for student growth have been established, and there is a prevailing sense that the objectives are achievable with consistent, sustained effort.</p> <p>Clear baseline data are available and trend data are regularly reviewed as a means to make informed decisions.</p> <p>The relationship between the mission, beliefs, and objectives is clear and consistent. The objectives explicate in measurable terms the key end results</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
				that the school seeks to realize from its mission.
<b>Constituent Support for Mission, Beliefs, and Objectives</b>	Constituents are unaware of the mission, beliefs, and/or objectives or they disagree with them.	<p>Constituents have some knowledge that the mission, beliefs, and objectives exist, but can not identify specifically what they say.</p> <p>When read to the constituents, they indicate that they would likely support the mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.</p>	Most constituents can generally describe the mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. They can indicate some concrete ways of how to implement the concepts identified in these documents.	Nearly all constituents can cite the mission, beliefs, and/or objectives in their own words, if not verbatim. They can articulate a number of concrete and specific ways the mission, beliefs, and objectives have shaped and continue to impact the life of the school and student learning.
<b>Action Plans</b>	<p>The action plans are not specific and may describe unrelated episodic activities, rather than clear and consistent steps aimed at achieving the <i>AFG</i> objectives. Action plans are more operational than strategic in nature.</p> <p>The logic and sequence of action steps is unclear or inappropriate.</p> <p>There is limited use of research-based action steps and the relationship to the Middle States accreditation standards review is unclear.</p> <p>Action plans may be missing or unclear on several critical components. Timelines may be unreasonable and resources inadequately allocated. Accountability is unclear. There are no</p>	<p>The plans provide for some variety of action steps, but may be too focused on a particular organizational issue or a particular group of students.</p> <p>The action steps are logical and sequenced. Care has been given to the initial years of the plan, but more long-range planning may be needed.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to action steps that are validated by educational research. Needs identified in the MSA standards review are frequently addressed in the action plans.</p> <p>Action plans may be missing one of the critical components. Timelines may require some revision, and greater clarity on resource allocations may be needed. The assignment of responsibilities is in place, but may need to be expanded or updated. Indicators of success</p>	<p>Action steps are comprehensive, clearly identified, and well-defined. The action steps are logical and ensure growth toward the achievement of the student performance objectives.</p> <p>The action plans provide a solid guide for school improvement efforts.</p> <p>Members of the school community are conversant on the research basis for some of the action steps. Strengths and weaknesses identified in the MSA accreditation standards review provide critical aspects of the action plan.</p> <p>Action plans contain all of the necessary components. Timelines are reasonable, and adequate resources are provided. Persons responsible for leading and implementing the action plans are identified. Indicators of success are provided.</p>	<p>The action plans provide richly detailed descriptions of concrete, research-based actions the school will take to achieve the specific results identified in the student performance objectives.</p> <p>The plans provide a specific road map for the next 2-3 years with global steps sketched out for the next 4-5 years. Action steps are presented in a logical order and are comprehensive.</p> <p>The action plan steps address many aspects of the school operations and the school population. The plans show a direct relationship to the Middle States standards for accreditation. There is clear evidence that the school has thought seriously about the “inputs” needed to accomplish the objectives.</p> <p>Accountability is clearly identified throughout the plan. Action steps include the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action steps/strategies that begin with an active verb to outline <u>how</u> and <u>what</u> will be done.</li> </ul>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	indicators of success or the Indicators are not directly related to action steps.	are provided, but may be cursory.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The name/title/role of the person (s) or group(s) <u>who</u> will be responsible for the action step.</li> <li>• The timeline outlining <u>when</u> the action steps will be accomplished.</li> <li>• The resources needed to accomplish the action step in terms of time, materials, funding, etc.</li> <li>• The indicators the school will use to determine whether the activity has been successfully accomplished.</li> <li>• The date on which the activity was completed.</li> </ul>

## REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
<b>Process for Reviewing MSA Accreditation Standards</b>	<p>A superficial analysis of the MSA accreditation standards occurred prior to the last Validation Team visit. Information from the analysis was used on a limited basis.</p> <p>The school has a vague sense of its strengths and weaknesses relative to the accreditation standards. Limited use is made of the indicators for each standard as guidelines for improved performance.</p> <p>A limited number of staff and</p>	<p>The MSA standards survey was administered prior to the last Validation Team visit, but has not been recently updated in any way.</p> <p>The school focuses mainly at the accreditation standards level and is just beginning to understand the implications of the indicators for each standard.</p> <p>Many staff members and administration are involved the review and analysis of adherence to the MSA accreditation standards.</p> <p>Discussions are held to review the</p>	<p>Reexamination of the school's strengths and weaknesses occurs on a regular basis.</p> <p>Action plans show evidence that analysis of and response to the accreditation standards review is regularly conducted.</p> <p>The school pays attention to both the accreditation standards and the indicators for each standard as guidelines and performance benchmarks.</p> <p>All members of the staff and administration are involved in the</p>	<p>A comprehensive, systematic, and ongoing process for analyzing strengths and weaknesses in each of the twelve accreditation standards areas is in place.</p> <p>Identified strengths and weaknesses, verified by data, are effectively used to enhance action plans and to encourage significant organizational growth.</p> <p>The school effectively utilizes the MSA accreditation standards <u>and</u> the indicators to promote high performance.</p> <p>A wide variety of different stakeholder</p>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
	<p>administration is involved in the review and analysis of adherence to the MSA accreditation standards.</p> <p>The school's strengths and weaknesses are infrequently discussed or reviewed in any formal setting.</p>	<p>school's perceived strengths and weaknesses, but may not be formalized or regular.</p>	<p>review and analysis of adherence to the MSA accreditation standards.</p> <p>Occasional discussions to review the school's perceived strengths and weaknesses are held at faculty meetings.</p>	<p>groups is involved, on an ongoing basis, in the review and analysis of adherence to the MSA accreditation standards.</p> <p>Ongoing discussions are held at faculty meetings and community forums on the school's perceived strengths and weaknesses. Solutions to challenges are actively and candidly explored and pursued.</p>

## **ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
<b>Accreditation Maintenance Requirements</b>	<p>The school does not fulfill all accreditation maintenance requirements by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being in dues or fees arrears for a year or more</li> <li>• incomplete filing of the Annual Profile or no submission at all.</li> <li>• Unwillingness to nominate individuals to serve on validation teams or no submission of the nomination forms</li> <li>• Unwillingness to host a Mid-Point Review Visit</li> </ul>	<p>The school meets the minimal requirements to maintain accreditation. Dues and fees are paid, the Annual Profile is submitted, and the team nomination forms are returned, after prompting by MSA staff.</p>	<p>The school completes all accreditation maintenance requirements in a timely fashion. A few individuals are nominated each year to serve on validation teams.</p>	<p>The school carefully tracks and eagerly fulfills all accreditation maintenance requirements of the Association. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All dues and fees are paid on time, without reminder. The school takes advantage of "early bird discounts."</li> <li>• The Annual Profile to update MSA on changes to school contact information and enrollment is fully completed and returned promptly.</li> <li>• Team nomination forms are completed and returned annually. Staff is actively encouraged to participate on validation teams, and support such as class coverage is eagerly given.</li> <li>• Individuals are encouraged to exercise their leadership skills through service and training as</li> </ul>

<i>The school can provide.....</i>	<b>Limited Evidence or No Evidence</b>	<b>Adequate/ Basic Evidence</b>	<b>Good Evidence</b>	<b>Exceptional Evidence</b>
				validation team chairs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective and pertinent information is prepared for the Mid-Point Review. The Mid-Point Visitor is welcomed and provided all necessary data to allow for a rich and accurate Mid-Point Review Report.</li> </ul>