

MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSIONS ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
GLOBAL LITERACIES
PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDDLE STATES PROGRAMS OF DISTINCTION

Middle States *Programs of Distinction* recognize outstanding individual programs within MSA accredited and candidate schools and school systems. MSA offers schools and school systems the opportunity to assess the following areas of their curricula for excellence against internationally recognized Standards and Indicators of Quality in each field.

21st Century Skills
Early Childhood Education
Global Literacies
Music
Service Learning
School Counseling
STEM
Visual Arts
World Languages

If a school/system's program demonstrates that it meets the expectations of the Standards and Indicators of Quality at a consistently high level and exhibits the characteristics essential to serving as a high quality exemplar program for other schools, the *Program of Distinction* will be awarded. The expectations for earning recognition as a MSA *Program of Distinction* are very high. As such, a small percentage of programs will be determined eligible to receive the **award**.

Alternatively, schools and school systems can use the MSA *Program of Distinction* process as a tool for **program evaluation** that will yield comprehensive feedback for growth and improvement of the chosen area.

For **award or program evaluation**, the school/system will complete a rigorous self-assessment that is presented in a self study report of the school/system's program. The self-study report is sent to MSA for review and if all is determined to be in order, a specialist visitor or visitors will be assigned to visit the school to validate the program's self assessment and offer feedback. For schools/systems applying for an **award**, the specialist visitor(s) will make a recommendation to award or defer recognition of the program as a MSA *Program of Distinction*. For schools/systems engaging in **program evaluation**, a detailed feedback report including recommendations and resources will be provided to the school/system.

The specialist visits can be scheduled either in conjunction with a Team Visit for accreditation or reaccreditation, or independently at any time during the accreditation period.

Schools and school systems that have engaged in the MSA *Program of Distinction* evaluation process either for the purpose of seeking an award or for conducting a program evaluation have benefitted greatly from the actual experience as well as the outcome of the process. We encourage you to consider either of these approaches for realizing recognition and growth and improvement of your school or school system.

After review of this document, if you are interested in receiving the application for this *Program of Distinction*, please contact your staff liaison/Associate Director or Audra Moyer, amoyer@cess-msa.org.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL LITERACIES PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION?

The Global Literacies Program of Distinction, formerly known as the International Credential, was originally designed by Middle States Association to recognize “gold standard” programs in International Education. Following in the footsteps of the first International Credential developed in 2005, the Global Literacies Program of Distinction supports and promotes learning about, experiencing and understanding cultures different from one’s own, all of which are indispensable to functioning in an interconnected world. In today’s increasingly more complex and volatile world, there is an even greater need for students in all countries to develop the ability to view the world from the perspectives of others including being able to communicate with them in their own languages. In particular, cultural agility is an essential 21st century skill for successfully interacting with others socially, politically and in the work place.

In order to understand the complexity and vulnerability of the world in which we currently live and be able to contribute meaningfully and productively, it is critical that students learn the importance of seeking peace, social justice and equity for all, as well develop the academic skill set deemed necessary to compete in this rapidly changing world. This can be accomplished through instilling a sense of shared humanity, while respecting the variety of cultures, any of which we may encounter at any given moment. Further, diverse deep cultural experiences focusing on the perspectives in addition to the practices and products of the peoples of a culture are essential to the development of the global citizens the world needs right now as well as in the foreseeable future. Lastly, opportunities to contribute through service on all levels - local, national and global - are crucial for developing civic responsibility, compassion and appreciation of the rewards gained through sharing learning experiences and helping others.

The Middle States Association is fully aware of the challenges that schools/systems face in offering a program of study that develops “global literacies” and provides rich, meaningful cultural experiences. The Global Literacies Program of Distinction will publicly acknowledge the school/system’s commitment to a humanity focused, practically grounded global education experience that is well integrated into the curriculum and co-curricular activities of the school/system. The tangible evidence of this commitment will be an educational program that includes learning about diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles through critical thinking and problem solving, developing proficiency at functional levels in other languages, and participation in real life experiences for developing cultural agility. Further, the school/system enhances curricular assessment practices with student reflection on their thoughts and actions. Ultimately, the school/system will show that global literacies are imbedded into all aspects of its programs and services.

The Global Literacies Program of Distinction has been developed by MSA staff and a group of international school leaders serving in schools overseas and in the United States. This evaluation tool reflects a synthesis of their knowledge, research, experiences in schools and with international education professional organizations. The Global Literacies Program of Distinction has “set the bar high” in the interest of recognizing and promoting successful global learning throughout the world. Schools/systems achieving the Program of Distinction will serve as exemplary models for others to emulate, as well as attain highly deserved recognition in the form of external validation.

Middle States member schools with programs they believe qualify are invited to apply for the Global Literacies Program of Distinction. We encourage schools/systems to consider applying even if they believe they have not yet achieved the described criterion. The self study process and feedback from the Middle States visitors can serve as a valuable program evaluation tool and effective guide toward attaining the Program of Distinction in the future.

THE GLOBAL LITERACIES PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION CRITERION

The Criterion: *The school/system’s foundation documents reflect a commitment to facilitating the development of global literacies, i.e., the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential to responsible global citizenship. It is understood by the members of the school community that global literacies include the understanding of other cultures’ practices, products and perspectives, the ability to think critically and creatively, the acceptance and appreciation of diversity, the development of compassion and empathy for others, and engagement in local and global issues. Ultimately, global literacies will be evidenced through the students’ capabilities to interact with cultural agility, including communicating effectively in other languages.*

This commitment is demonstrated through a focus on global citizenship that is embedded in the school/system’s educational programs, activities and services, to which all students are provided access. Real life opportunities for interactions and engagement with other cultures, such as contributing through service, support and enhance the educational program. Student reflection on their thoughts and actions regarding their global experiences plays a significant role in assessing the acquisition of global literacies. The school/system’s programs and services promoting global citizenship are supported by qualified staff and appropriate resources to ensure students develop the international mindedness that will enable them to function effectively in the global community. The school/system’s programs and services exemplify its commitment to global literacies by meeting the diverse needs of its students from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

THE INDICATORS OF QUALITY

<i>The School/System’s Mission</i>	
GL.1	The school/system demonstrates that it has identified fundamental humanitarian principles, such as the United States inalienable rights or the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which are embraced, taught and practiced by the stakeholders.
GL.3	The school/system’s Mission, Core Values and Profile of Graduates and/or other foundation documents reflect a commitment to the development of global literacies as an essential component of its students’ education and celebrate the global ethos of the school/system.
GL.4	The school/system’s Profile of Graduates includes essential elements of global literacies and/or global citizenship.
GL.5	The school/system reveals an understanding of global literacies as the core of international education and the development of cultural agility as a means to increase understanding, acceptance and appreciation of diverse cultures.

GL.6	The school/system ensures that the value and benefits of the study of global literacies are generally understood and accepted by the governance, staff, parents, and broader educational community.
GL.7	The focus on global literacies informs the school/system's daily operation and instructional decision-making as well as long range planning.

Governance and Leadership

GL.8	The school/system demonstrates through its policies and procedures that children are protected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from practices that may foster racial, ethnic, religious, or any other form of discrimination • against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation
GL.9	For school/systems located outside the United States, policies and practices that ensure respect for the laws, customs and traditions of the host country are in place. For school/systems located in the United States, procedures and practices that demonstrate knowledge and respect for local immigrant and minority populations are in place.
GL.10	The governance and leadership are compelling models for understanding and appreciation of diverse culture's perspectives, practices and products.

School Climate and Organization

GL.11	The school/system makes clear efforts to recruit, hire and retain members of the faculty and staff who demonstrate sensitivity toward students from diverse backgrounds, an understanding of global literacies, and the ability or potential to integrate global literacies into their curricula, co-curricular activities and services provided to students.
GL.12	The school/system provides professional development opportunities that enable faculty and staff to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to provide learning experiences that ensure the development of global literacies.
GL.13	Students, teachers, counselors, support staff and administrators acknowledge and honor each others' histories and cultures.
GL.14	The school/system staff members promote student global awareness by working collaboratively with mutual respect and open dialogue with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles. Friendship and solidarity among peoples is actively sought.
GL.15	Students confirm their voices are heard, acknowledged and respected within the school/system.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

GL.16	The school/system has a written, taught and assessed curriculum that provides learning experiences in global literacies.
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GL.17	The global literacies curriculum is clearly defined, approved by the governance and is consistent with the school/system's foundation documents.
GL.18	The school/system's curriculum provides students with ongoing opportunities to develop global literacies and cultural agility as well as learn about diverse cultures, perspectives and lifestyles.
GL.19	Attainable outcomes for student acquisition of global literacies are identified and reflect the school/system's Profile of Graduates.
GL.20	Standards of excellence recognized by the profession in global citizenship and 21 st century skills provide the basis for determining the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed through curricular and co-curricular global learning experiences.
GL.21	The identified knowledge, skills and attitudes are imbedded throughout the curriculum and are readily evident in the humanities (languages, social studies and the arts), but not to the exclusion of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM).
GL.22	Recognized best practices in curriculum development guide the articulation, review, and revision of the global literacies curriculum.
GL.23	Interdisciplinary connections are included in the curriculum, thus furthering and reinforcing learning of global literacies in other content areas.
GL.24	Opportunities for critical and creative thinking, reasoning, problem solving and decision making are focal points of instructional strategies for teaching global literacies.
GL.25	The curriculum offers a variety of cultural experiences that enhance student knowledge and develop their cultural agility including opportunities to experience other cultures first hand.
GL.26	Service opportunities, local, national and global, are available to students in order to experience common learning experiences by working alongside others, show empathy for others, and care for the world around them.
GL.27	The school/system's English language program provides effective instruction including a high level of support and appropriate challenge so that all students' needs are met.
GL.28	The languages curriculum intertwines the essential elements of culture, i.e., the products, practices and perspectives of the people who speak the target languages and the relationships among them, with practical use of the language throughout all levels of the curriculum. The target language becomes a vehicle for acquiring information and recognizing distinctive viewpoints.
GL.29	In schools outside the United States, opportunities to learn and/or further develop proficiency in the host country and mother tongue languages are available to students to facilitate the development of a strong sense of one's own cultural identity. In schools in the United States, opportunities to learn and or further develop proficiency in native and heritages languages are available to students to facilitate the development of a strong sense of one's own cultural identity.

.GL.30	Assessment of global literacies includes student reflection on their thoughts and actions taken in response to their global learning experiences.
GL.31	Diverse learner needs are addressed through recognized best practices such as differentiation in order to provide access to acquiring global literacies to all students.
GL.32	The school/system's curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of the various cultural and religious backgrounds of the student body. Where appropriate, provisions are made for students whose backgrounds, cultures, or religious beliefs make the regular program inappropriate for them.
GL.33	The curriculum provides appropriate academic preparation for those students who intend to study at colleges and universities around the world.

Resources

GL.34	The school shows its commitment to developing global citizenship through the dedication of resources (financial, human, physical, time, etc.) that promote the acquisition of global literacies.
GL.35	Current technologies that provide access to authentic materials as well as opportunities for real life interactions and cooperative projects with students in other schools and countries are key components of the curriculum.
GL.36	The school partners with universities and various institutions to augment program offerings, obtain resources, and provide staff and students unique opportunities for cultural interactions. For example, partnerships with universities may include pre-service training programs and inquiry projects while opportunities for grants and fellowships may come from government agencies and foreign embassies.

Student Services

GL.37	The school/system tailors student services, e.g., guidance, health, food services, learning and language support) to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.
GL.38	The admissions process provides effective support and service to meet the needs of a highly mobile student population.
GL.35	Clearly written guidelines and procedures facilitate the smooth transfer of students and their transcripts within and outside the United States including the transfer of course credits from other schools, as well assistance needed in exiting the school/system.
GL.39	Guidance and counseling services are available students adjust as they move into the host country, as they prepare for return to their home country or another country, and as they deal with a changing social network to help.
GL.40	College admissions and guidance processes designed to support students who intend to attend colleges and universities around the world are available.
GL.41	The school/system has effective programs in place to serve English language learners.

<i>Student Life and Student Activities</i>	
GL.42	The culture of the school demonstrates respect for cultural and religious differences in the backgrounds of students and staff.
GL.43	The school takes into account the cultural and religious diversity of the student population when planning and implementing its school calendar and its student activities program.
GL.44	The school takes advantage of local resources and culture to educate its students. For those schools in non-English speaking areas, the global literacies curriculum provides opportunities for education and immersion in the local language.
GL.45	Opportunities for international travel, international experiences, and student exchange programs exist, allowing students to experience other cultures firsthand.

APPLYING FOR THE PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION

QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications must be met in order for a School/System to apply for the Program of Distinction:

- The School/System must be accredited by MSA-CESS or be a candidate for accreditation by MSA-CESS.
- If applying for the Program of Distinction independent of a current self-study and accreditation/reaccreditation process, the School/System must:
 - Demonstrate that it meets all of the appropriate Standards for Accreditation at the time of its last evaluation and/or
 - Provide evidence that it has addressed successfully all areas of the Standards identified for improvement through Stipulation or Accreditation Maintenance Reports.
- If applying for the Program of Distinction as a part of a current self-study and accreditation process in preparation for a Team Visit, the School/System will integrate the Program of Distinction application as an additional component of the self-study and Team Visit.

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are offered to Schools/Systems wishing to apply for the Program of Distinction:

Schools/systems:

- Must be a candidate or accredited member in good standing of MSA-CESS or an Alliance partner.
- Must be willing to accept an on-site Team Visit to validate the Program of Distinction application. If the School/System is seeking the Program of Distinction as a part of a Team Visit or Mid-Term Review, the School/System must be willing to accept at least one additional team member to focus on the Program of Distinction Application.
- Must give MSA-CESS notice of its intention to apply for the Program of Distinction at least six months prior to the date of the expected evaluation visit.
- Must meet all of the appropriate Standards for Accreditation in order to be awarded the Program of Distinction. Schools/Systems that are “Accredited with Stipulations” are eligible for the Program of Distinction.
- May seek the Program of Distinction at any time.
- May seek the Program of Distinction as a program evaluation for an additional fee.

If a Schools/System is receiving a Program of Distinction Visitor as a part of a Team Visit, the Program of Distinction Visitor will integrate his/her activities into the three and one-half-day schedule of the Team Visit. If a School/System is receiving a Program of Distinction Visitor as a part of a Mid-Term Review or independent of any other accreditation activities, the Program of Distinction Visitor(s) will develop a separate schedule of meetings specifically targeted on validation of the findings in the School's/System's Application for the Program of Distinction. This may require an additional day extension to the typical one-day Mid-Term Review.

The decisions that the Visitor will recommend are either to award the Program of Distinction or to deny awarding the Program of Distinction. When the awarding of the Program of Distinction is denied, schools/systems may reapply at a later date by submitting a new Application for the Program of Distinction.

The term/length of time for the award of the Program of Distinction will be made to coincide with the School/System's term of accreditation. When the Program of Distinction has been awarded, it is expected that renewal of the Program of Distinction, if desired, will be tied to the renewal of the School/System's accreditation.

ACTIVITY	DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
Submission of the Program of Distinction Commitment Form	At least six months prior to the intended date of visit
Submission of the completed Application for the Program of Distinction	At least two months prior to the date of the intended visit

*Schools/Systems may also complete the application for the purpose of a program evaluation and not for seeking the Program of Distinction. Full details will follow in a separate section.

STEPS TO EARNING AND MAINTAINING THE PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION

- 1) The School/System completes the Program of Distinction application, either as a part of its current self-study process or separately as a "stand-alone" application.
- 2) The School/System submits the Program of Distinction Commitment Form.
- 3) The School/System submits the Application for the Program of Distinction to MSA-CESS along with payment.
- 4) The staff coordinator for the Program of Distinction evaluates the Application to determine how well it meets the Criterion and Indicators of Quality and the school/system's readiness to host the Visitor. The staff coordinator will provide feedback to the school/system and a recommendation regarding whether or not a Visitor should be appointed at this time.

- 5) The Visitor(s) appointed by MSA to evaluate the School/System's application have substantial educational, and/or administrative experience. The number of visitors will vary depending upon the comprehensiveness of the School/System's initiatives in the Program of Distinction area, the size of School/System, etc.
- 6) Upon the completion of the visit, the Visitor submits the Report and a recommendation for award or denial of the Program of Distinction. Upon the receipt of the Visitor's report, the staff Coordinator develops an analysis of the Visitor's report and makes a staff recommendation on the award of the Program of Distinction.
- 7) An MSA Accreditation Advisory Committee reviews the Visitor's report and the School/System's application and determines its recommendation on the award of the Program of Distinction. The Middle States Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committees review the recommendations of staff and the accreditation advisory committee and make a recommendation to the full Commissions.
- 8) The Commissions make a final decision on the award of the Program of Distinction. MSA determines the term of the Program of Distinction, which will generally coincide with the school's/system's normal accreditation term.
- 9) The school/system ensures that all future accreditation maintenance activities (e.g. Periodic Reviews, Mid-Term Reviews Visits, etc.) will examine progress on recommendations outlined in the school/system's Program of Distinction application and the Visitor's report.

The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools meet twice a year (typically in April and October) to make accreditation decisions. It is at that time that decisions regarding the award of the Program of Distinction will be made although; the School/System will be informed of the recommendation of the Visitor prior to their departure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our school/system does not have a diverse population of languages and ideas. Is this required?

While a certain amount of diversity within an institution may make a school/system a stronger candidate for the Global Literacies Program of Distinction, this is by no means a requirement. As long as the school/system believes and practices the underlying ideals of global literacies that are reflected in the Global Literacies Program of Distinction Criterion and Indicators, then it is eligible for the Program of Distinction.

Do overseas schools and international schools in the United States automatically qualify for this Program of Distinction?

While a number of overseas schools or international schools in the United States may qualify for the Program of Distinction, it is not automatically conferred. MSA believes strongly that

any school/system deserving of the Program of Distinction should first conduct an evaluation of the Criterion and Indicators that commonly define the Global Literacies Program of Distinction. Part of the value in seeking the Program of Distinction is the assurance it provides to the world community that the school/system is examining its programs, activities and services associated with global literacies to identify its strengths and commitment to improvement. Equally important is that the findings of the self examination have been validated by external reviewers. Finally, a key aspect of the application process is to identify action steps for future improvement. An “automatic qualification” would not ensure that this occurs.

USING THE APPLICATION FOR A PROGRAM EVALUATION

The following guidelines are offered to schools wishing to use the Program of Distinction **ONLY** as a Program Evaluation tool:

- Schools/Systems may seek the Program of Distinction as a program evaluation tool at any time.
- Schools/Systems seeking to use the Program of Distinction as a formal program evaluation tool must be willing to accept an onsite visit to validate the findings of the self-study. If the school/system is seeking the program evaluation as a part of a team visit or Mid-Term review, the School/System must be willing to accept at least one additional team member to focus on the components of the program.
- If a school is receiving a Visitor as a part of a team visit, the Visitor shall integrate his/her activities into the 3 and ½ day schedule of the team. If a school is receiving a Visitor as a part of a Mid-Term Review or independent of any other accreditation activities, the Visitor shall develop a separate schedule of meetings specifically targeted on validation of the findings in the school’s self-study of the program. This may require an additional day extension to the typical one-day Mid-Term Review.
- Schools must give MSA-CESS notice of its intention to apply for the Program Evaluation at least six months prior to the date of the expected evaluation visit.
- Schools seeking a Program Evaluation independent of any other MSA-CESS accreditation activities shall adhere to the following timelines:

ACTIVITY	DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
Submission of the Program of Distinction/Evaluation Commitment Form	At least six months prior to the intended date of visit
Submission of the completed Application for the Program of Distinction/Evaluation	At least two months prior to the date of the intended visit

PREPARING FOR AND HOSTING THE VISITOR(S)

When the school/system's application has been received and reviewed by the Middle States staff, a visitor(s) will be assigned, and the length of the visit will be determined based upon the size and scope of the school/system's programs, activities and services featuring Global Literacies and the type of visit. The visit may be arranged as a "stand alone" or in conjunction with a regularly scheduled accreditation visit. The Visitor(s) will contact the school/system to arrange the details. The purpose of the visit will be to validate the school/system's application, ascertain the quality of the program vis à vis the Criterion and Indicators of Quality, and present a formal report of the findings to the school/system and to Middle States Association. (Note: The formal report of the findings for a program evaluation will be presented to the school only). A schedule will be developed by the Visitor(s) and Global Literacies liaison that will include interviews, classroom observations, and review of materials and documents.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The Global Literacies Program of Distinction or Evaluation Visitor(s) will more than likely want to meet with the following individuals and groups:

- Board Member(s)
- Superintendent of Schools
- Director of Curriculum
- The Head(s) of School
- Global Literacies Steering Committee
- School Selected Faculty and Staff Members (for their involvement in teaching global literacies)
- Selected Activities Advisors (for their involvement in advising co-curricular activities focusing on global literacies)
- Guidance Counselors
- Students
- Parents
- Community members, representatives from partnerships, consultants and other stakeholders as appropriate

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Observations should be arranged so that the Visitor(s) see as many of the school/system's programs that incorporate global literacies as possible in the time allotted. If a system is applying, all schools in the system will be visited.

MATERIALS AND DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

It is recommended that the school/system have available a variety of evidence in support of its self assessment and application for the Global Literacies Program of Distinction. Online documents and electronic versions including external drives and video streaming are welcome. The suggestions below offer a wide range of evidence that the school/system could provide for the Visitor(s)' review during the visit:

- Curriculum guides and/or course outlines; access to online curriculum maps
- Program of Study (course offerings and descriptions)
- Sample units and/or lesson plans if not included in curriculum guides
- Samples of authentic instructional/ assessment materials
- Assessment tools including student reflections
- Documentation of partnerships, e.g., university collaborations, “sister school” relationships, global education projects, and community connections diverse cultures
- Documentation of field trips and extended travel opportunities the school/system offers to enhance learning of global literacies
- Documentation of co-curricular activities and events that celebrate and promote diverse cultures
- Documentation of the communication of the goals, value and benefits of global literacies within the school/system, to parents and to the community
- Policies that show how the school/system promotes global literacies, e.g., requirement for graduation or required course of designated cultural studies and/or language relevant to school community
- Budget demonstrating resource allocations to programs, activities and services involving global literacies
- Goals of the programs, activities, services involving global literacies and any short and/or long range plans that have been developed or are currently being developed to attain them
- Documentation of recognition, grants and/or scholarships the program, staff and/or students have been awarded in areas related to global literacies
- Documentation of any awards involving global literacies
- Other relevant materials

FEEDBACK FROM THE VISITORS

At the conclusion of the visit, the Visitor(s) will meet with the Head of School/System and any other key personnel as appropriate to offer feedback on the interviews, classroom observations, and review of materials and documents. A report of the visit observations and

findings will be forwarded to the Head of School/System within four weeks. If the school/system is seeking the Global Literacies Program of Distinction and has been recommended for it, the Program of Distinction will be officially conferred after review of the report and approval of the recommendation by the accreditation advisory committee and the MSA Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.