



LET'S BE EDUCATORS AGAIN

Message from MSA President Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

Welcome to the start of another new school year. This summer, I devoted much of my time to working through my summer reading list.

In his new memoir "How Schools Work," former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan points to a disconnect between what American politicians say when it comes to education and what they ultimately do. The "big lie," according to Duncan, is the discrepancy between the government's professed belief in the importance of education and the absence of public policy or funding to support that belief.

What Duncan does not mention is that the key to improving education in the United States is to keep it in local hands. In fact, decisions aimed at treating teachers well and providing students with high-quality education should not be rooted in politics.

Education is, by design, a responsibility of the states. In most states, education is left to local control, and for good reason. It is a process best regulated, designed, delivered and assessed by people deeply rooted in a community who knows its children best.

It should not take a national policy for a community to provide quality education, to give teachers a place of distinction in our society, or to demonstrate the value we place on educating new generations of students.

Education reformers are extolling the virtues of world-class schools from Singapore to Finland as examples we should emulate. Studying those systems proves that America may well be on the wrong path.

The world's best schools are not obsessed with dense curriculum or burdensome accountability. They are not spending more than the United States on education, and often their students spend less time in the classroom than American students.

What they do is invest in developing strong, local education leaders. Instead of increasing governmental bureaucracy, they increase the professionalism of teachers by giving them greater responsibility for educational decisions, and they encourage innovative solutions to educational challenges at the local level.

There is a new medical show scheduled to premiere this fall, called New Amsterdam, in which the lead urges his medical staff to forget about the business and politics of medicine and re-focus on patient care. In the TV trailer for the show he says, "Let's be doctors again."

A new school year is underway, and my message to all of our educators is this: Stop worrying so much about accountability and waiting for political solutions. Instead, do what you know works best for your students. This year, let's be educators again.



Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

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PROVEN PRACTICES TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

AUDIENCE #1: PARENTS

Demystify the Process

Prior to beginning the accreditation process, tell parents what to expect. This can be done during a meeting, by publishing an article in your newsletter, placing a post on social media, or by sending a letter home with students. Describe the steps in the process and how parents may get involved. (We have sample language you can use.)

Communicate Through Their Kids

Talk to your students about the process, and explain why it's important their parents get involved. Celebrate the class with the highest parent participation in the self-study survey with a pizza party.

Hablas Espanol?

Translate self-study parent surveys to make them accessible to all parents. Middle States' schools throughout the world have translated the surveys into more than a dozen foreign languages. (Contact us for samples.)

Appoint a Liaison

Include a parent liaison on the Planning Team. This person should be the primary communicator to other families, and a champion of the process.

Be Transparent

Survey the entire parent community as part of the process and then share the results of those surveys. Compare parent responses to what students and faculty said. Let parents know how you are going to address any areas of concern.

Feed Them!

When there are parent meetings to discuss accreditation or an organized time for survey completion, provide food and drinks.

Open Hours at the Computer Lab

Not all parents have access to or comfort with technology. Keep the school computer lab open one evening and encourage parents to meet with teachers or administrators and fill out the self-study surveys in person.

Writers and Editors Wanted

There are several parts of the self-study that require creative writing skills. Invite parents who enjoy writing and are skilled writers to draft some of the report narrative or provide editing services.

HAVE YOU REGISTERED FOR FALL 2018 WORKSHOPS?

MSA-CESS offers all workshops free of charge to members, and we have a series of workshops to meet your needs at every stage of the 7-year accreditation cycle. [SIGN UP TODAY!](#)



Organizing For Self-Study



Developing the Plan



Team Member Briefing



Hosting Your Team Visit



Maintaining the Momentum



Completing Your Mid-Term Report

ACS BEIRUT'S WORLD LANGUAGES PROGRAM STANDS APART



The Arabic Program at American Community School (ACS) Beirut is the first to receive the Middle States Association World Language Program of Distinction for offering an exemplary language program, a model of excellence in curriculum design, instructional strategies and assessments.

American and international schools face challenges in building strong Arabic programs that seamlessly merge U.S. approaches and methodologies with Arabic language specifications. Often, host governments require schools to take a traditional approach to teaching the curricula. This, combined with a lack of proper resources, teacher training, and access to engaging materials, add to the challenges overseas U.S. schools face in developing meaningful Arabic language programs.

To respond to these challenges, ACS Beirut's Arabic program initiated a major overhaul of its curriculum in 2003, and a second curriculum review in 2013.

Today, experienced Arabic teachers incorporate both U.S. and Arabic-specific approaches to a standards-based curriculum that also meets requirements of the Lebanese Baccalaureate track (LB), the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program and the AERO project.



FIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR ACCREDITATION THIS FALL

Accreditation is a significant achievement that should be celebrated. You can follow these tips to make sure all stakeholders, including students, parents, and the broader community, know your school is accredited.

1. Add our brochure, "Why Accreditation? For Parents" to your registration packets and make them available in the main office, guidance departments and at Back-to-School nights.
2. Contact your Accreditation Officer or the MSA-CESS offices to arrange an Accreditation Certificate presentation ceremony. Invite students, staff, parents, civic leaders, community members and the local media to attend.
3. Note your Middle States-accredited status in your standard phone greeting, live and recorded.
4. Contact local and regional media including daily and weekly newspapers, magazines for parents and families, online publications like Patch.com, local education bloggers, radio and television stations to announce your new accreditation or reaccreditation. (We have a news release template you can use.) Make note of your accreditation in any other news releases you issue.
5. Include the MSA-CESS logo and a tagline indicating accreditation on school stationery, website, and any other published materials. Need an electronic copy of the logo? Email us at info@msa-cess.org for jpeg and eps files.

Q & A WITH MIDDLE STATES COMMISSIONER JANASEE SINCLAIR



Janasee Sinclair recently retired as principal at St. Croix Central High School in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. She will remain actively involved in the educational process.

Q. How did you get your start in education?

A. I was living in New York City and traveled to the U.S. Virgin Islands on vacation in 1975. I wanted to teach, but there was a freeze on hiring teachers in New York at the time. I learned there was a significant need for teachers in the U.S. Virgin Islands so I applied and landed a teaching position while I was still on vacation. I've been here ever since.

Q. How did you become involved with Middle States?

A. Many years ago, the first high school where I worked as an assistant principal went through the accreditation process. This helped me to understand and engage in the process. As the years progressed, I became a principal and my new school also went through the accreditation process. An accreditation officer came to my school to conduct workshops and eventually, I was asked if I wanted to become involved with Middle States. I was eager to support the organization because I believe in the Middle States process and see its value to schools and school systems.

Q. What do you see as one of the main benefits of Middle States accreditation?

A. There are many benefits but primarily it's our ability to assist schools in examining their existing instruction and practices. All schools should go through the accreditation process as an assessment tool to evaluate the educational quality and culture of the school.

Q. What is one piece of career advice you would give to a younger version of yourself?

A. My advice to anyone entering the field is that educating a child is not just imparting knowledge. To be an effective educator you must be nurturing, caring and respectful of all students. Our role as educators is to make sure that students understand that they are capable of achieving their goals. We must always help our students to believe in themselves.

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and Follow Us On
Twitter!



Q. What are you planning to do in retirement?

A. I plan to consult with schools that are working with at-risk populations. Where I live in the Virgin Islands, there was a devastating storm recently and we are still in the process of rebuilding. Families were displaced and some had to leave the island. Many are starting to come back and for students who had their education interrupted, re-engaging in school is a challenge. They need extra time and support, and even materials. I want to help schools that are helping those students. I'm also planning to read many books by my favorite authors and hope to travel to a few bucket list places including Panama, Australia, and China.

Q. What is your favorite book?

A. *Plum Island* by Nelson DeMille. It's a thriller that follows wounded NYPD homicide detective John Corey as he investigates the murder of a young couple in a Long Island town.



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