



## THANK YOU TO OUR MSA VOLUNTEERS

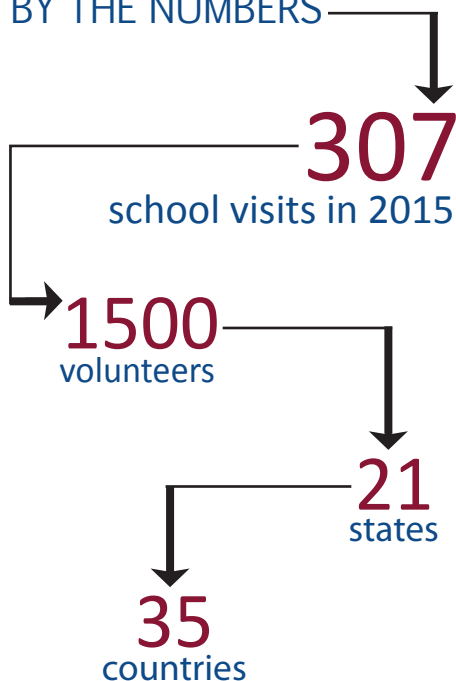
Message from MSA President Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

When I talk about the Middle States Association in terms of our more than 2,700 members throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, and nearly 100 countries around the world, it is assumed that Middle States is a massive organization.

Most people, however, are surprised to learn that our full and part-time staff is less than 20 and that the bulk of our work is conducted by more than 1,500 volunteers annually. Last year alone, these volunteers participated in more than 300 school visits in 21 states and 35 countries.

As most educators know, professional development is critical and networking with your peers is invaluable when it comes to personal and professional growth. Serving on a Middle States team provides educators with opportunities for both - and much more.

### BY THE NUMBERS



The scope of our membership provides volunteers the opportunity to visit a wide range of schools with diverse teaching and learning methodologies, and offers the chance to observe proven best practices in action. Additionally, Middle States team service delivers professional development at no cost and provides professional development credits.

But our team members report an added – and perhaps most important – benefit: returning to their own schools with new ideas ready for immediate implementation.

On behalf of the Middle States Association, I thank all of our volunteers – from our Commission members and Advisory Committee members to the thousands of volunteers and team chairs – for helping make the pursuit of the Middle State mission possible.

And if you're not a volunteer yet, what are you waiting for?

Becoming a volunteer is as easy as asking your principal to submit your name or contacting our volunteer coordinator Irene Raatz at [iraatzs@msa-cess.org](mailto:iraatzs@msa-cess.org). To learn more about becoming a volunteer visit our website and click on the Volunteer tab.

Thank you again for your service. I hope to see many of you on a team again soon.



Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

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## SAINT JOHN'S SCHOOL RECOGNIZED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Saint John's School in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was recently recognized by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools for its Program of Distinction in Early Childhood Education.

The Middle States Programs of Distinction initiative provides external validation of an accredited school's accomplishments in specific areas of expertise and enables schools to take accreditation to the next level.

MSA accredited schools are eligible to apply for Program of Distinction recognition for outstanding programs in 21st Century Skills, Global Literacies, World Languages, Visual Arts, Music, Early Childhood Education, Service Learning, School Counseling and STEM Education.

The Early Childhood Education Program of Distinction recognizes schools that demonstrate dedication to early learning through a rich, child centered philosophy and best practices that focus on exploration, questioning, creativity and social-emotional development, as well as cognitive skills.

"Our recent expansion of our Early Childhood Program to include Pre-Pre Kindergarten for 3 year olds is a reflection of our commitment to guiding our students at Saint John's School on a path toward success," said Head of School Lorraine Lago. "Early childhood education provides a crucial first step for young children, and we are thrilled that Middle States has recognized our program for its dedication to high-quality learning for all children."

**Does your school have a program that should be recognized as a Program of Distinction? We want to know! Contact us at 267.284.5000 or [info@msa-cess.org](mailto:info@msa-cess.org).**



## NEW JERSEY SCHOOL DISTRICT USES SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR ACCREDITATION



Congratulations to the Freehold Regional High School District in Monmouth County, N.J. for being the latest school system to use to Middle

States Systems Approach to achieve accreditation.

The Systems Approach to accreditation examines school systems as a whole, ensuring that all levels are strategically aligned and working collaboratively to meet common goals and grow and improve student performance.

All six schools in the Freehold Regional High School District were accredited as a system.

**For more information about the Systems Approach to Accreditation call 267.284.5000 or e-mail [info@msa-cess.org](mailto:info@msa-cess.org).**

## 100 SCHOOLS FROM AROUND WORLD EARN TOP RECOGNITION FROM MIDDLE STATES

One hundred schools and school systems in 11 states and Puerto Rico and seven countries recently earned accreditation or reaccreditation from the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CES).

The Commissions voted on the accreditations at the biannual meeting in Philadelphia last month.

"Middle States accreditation helps schools all over the world critically review their performance, set a course for positive change and generate the commitment and support necessary for significant and long-term improvement," said Henry G. Cram, Ed.D., MSA-CES president. "Whether a school looks to build on its record of high performance and solid reputation or is interested in setting a new course for continuous school improvement, Middle States accreditation is a catalyst for making every school better."

A full list of schools and school systems that earned accreditation or reaccreditation is available [here](#).

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: IF WE KNEW THEN, WHAT WE KNOW NOW



By Art Albrizio, Pat Imprevuto and David Montroni, Ed.D

For principals immersed in the day-to-day operations of a school, it can be challenging to stay focused on the big picture of continuous school improvement.



We know. We've been there.

Among the three of us, we have more than 50 years of collective experience as school principals, serving diverse student populations and school communities.



Now, working for the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, we have the benefit of being able to look at schools with a wider lens and have seen the tremendous value that strategic planning can have in improving education and outcomes.

If only we knew then, what we know now. Here are some of the lessons we've learned along the way:

- School improvement works best when you build support and commitment from the school community, including students, teachers and parents. When everyone works together to establish priorities and set goals, they have a vested interest in succeeding.
- Having a strategic plan helps you stay focused on the long-term while dealing with the "Daily Creature Features." Someone's classroom is too hot. Someone's classroom is too cold. There is no decaffeinated tea in the lunchroom. Running a school can at times seem like a never-ending game of Whack-A-Mole, but having a strategic plan can help you keep your eye on the big picture.
- Collaboration is key. As a principal, it can be easy to think that your way is the right – and only – way. However, by collaborating with others including administrators, faculty, staff, students and parents you gain valuable perspectives and gather new ideas, adding to your toolbox of solutions and ultimately making you a better leader. Get out of your comfort zone.
- All schools can improve. By setting goals and establishing a framework to reach them, schools across the spectrum – from the highest performing to the those in need of improvement – can outperform their past performance.
- Without a strategic plan that includes a clear mission statement and vision to drive the school and school system forward, you risk the chaos of teachers and staff rowing in different directions and students left to tread water until they graduate.

So how do you go about developing and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan that is meaningful and will help drive school and student improvement?

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## KEEPING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS CURRENT

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement, the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS) regularly reviews and updates the Standards for Accreditation.

MSA-CESS will conduct a full evaluation of the Standards as part of its next strategic plan in the upcoming year.

In the meantime, it recently added indicators related to boarding, special needs, and child protection. In creating these additional indicators, MSA-CESS took into account best practices of other accrediting agencies, the outcomes from the International Task Force on Child Protection, and the standards of cooperative agencies.

Additionally, certain indicators were reorganized, reordered or in some cases removed to better align with the Standards.

If you have any questions, please call 267.284.5000 or e-mail [info@msa-cess.org](mailto:info@msa-cess.org).

## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MSA?

Over the last few weeks our teams have visited schools ranging from an international school in Kuwait, to a charter school in PA, a Catholic school in the USVI, and a Jewish boys school in NY. We are proud of our diverse membership and the outstanding work of our volunteers!



KUWIAT BILINGUAL SCHOOL



DAVIS STAHLER YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS



IDEAL ACADEMY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL



SAINTS PETER & PAUL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: IF WE KNEW THEN, WHAT WE KNOW NOW (continued)

(continued from page 3)

In a word: accreditation.

The accreditation process helps schools and school leaders focus on where you are, where you are going, and how you can get there. The process pushes you – and your school community – to define what you expect your students to be like when they graduate and identify what it will take to achieve those expectations.

Unlike most state accountability systems, which focus only on student outcomes, the Middle States standards for accreditation offer schools and school systems a holistic approach for evaluating and improving performance.

Based on proven research and best practices, the Middle States standards are designed to supplement student-performance data by providing a more complete measure of a school's performance and chart a strategic and realistic course for continuous school improvement.

The standards represent the building blocks required for a quality school and educational program and provide the framework for a strategic plan. Through the accreditation process, the school determines which areas of its curriculum and organizational capacity are the priorities for growth and improvement, sets measurable goals to address these priorities, and then establishes a plan to achieve its objectives.

We know what you're thinking now. We've been there.

"Accreditation sounds great, but with all the other testing and reporting mandates I have to comply with, who has the time for it?"

Knowing what we know now, we would argue that going through the accreditation process is one of the best ways to spend your time as a school administrator.

Investing the time up front in developing a strategic plan saves you time in the long run. Rather than having to constantly weigh where to devote your energy and resources, the strategic plan lays it out.

And with the school community involved from the start, it diffuses the all-too-common refrain "no-one asked my opinion" that often obstructs new programs or new ways of doing things, leading to more of the status quo.

Accreditation is about pushing beyond the status quo, pushing beyond the mandates to truly provide the best education you can provide for your students from the very first day they enter your school through graduation.

Through its collaborative process and its opportunities to network and connect with other schools, accreditation pushes you to become a better leader and gives you the tools you need for you, your staff and your students to succeed.

**To learn more about Middle States accreditation call 267.284.5000 or e-mail [info@msa-cess.org](mailto:info@msa-cess.org). You can also visit the Middle States website at [www.msa-cess.org](http://www.msa-cess.org).**

*Art Albrizio served as principal of Red Bank Regional High School. Pat Impeveduto served as principal of Secaucus High School. David Montroni, Ed.D served as an elementary school principal for Clifton Public Schools. They are now accreditation officers for the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.*

*A version of this article first appeared in Educational Viewpoints, the scholarly journal of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.*

HAVE A  
GREAT  
SUMMER  
BREAK!



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