



## RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A Message from MSA-CESS President Lisa Marie McCauley, Ed.D., C.P.A.

Growing up, my parents – especially my father – always told me that nothing is impossible if I set my mind to it and stick with it.

I have brought that belief to everything I do, and though life has not always been easy, the challenges along the way have been part of the learning experience.

Needless to say, the past six months have presented challenges that few, if any, of us could have ever anticipated.

Middle States, however, has risen to meet those challenges, and by believing that nothing is impossible, we have been able to continue to support our member schools and advance our mission of improving the quality of education throughout the United States and around the world.

Our staff has worked tirelessly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a blended model for accreditation visits so that our schools can continue to benefit from the power of peer review.

A hallmark of Middle States accreditation, our peer review process brings together top educators from around the world to get to know each school, share ideas, discuss challenges, identify opportunities for growth and offer a personalized approach to accreditation.

While this school year may be different from years past, our member schools remain committed to providing a quality education for all. Thanks to tremendous planning, training and innovation, students and teachers are returning to the classroom - whether in person or virtually - ready for success.

At Middle States, we're ready too.

On behalf of our entire team, I wish you a happy and successful school year!

Sincerely,



Lisa Marie McCauley, Ed.D., C.P.A.

## MSA MOVES TO BLENDED/VIRTUAL ACCREDITATION VISITS FOR FALL 2020

Earlier this summer, MSA surveyed the school leaders of all Spring 2020 postponed visits and all Fall 2020 planned visits to ascertain how MSA could best support schools during this time. The vast majority of school leaders responded that moving forward with their accreditation visit was a priority. They also were supportive of the visit being virtual if need be. After gathering this data and determining that developing a virtual or blended model for accreditation visits was a priority for our members, MSA staff spent the summer working on developing a visit model that would be resilient to whatever the fall might bring for our schools.

As a result, all team visits for Fall 2020 will be held virtually; however, where possible, the chairperson may go onsite for one day. Please click [here](#) to see an overview of the visit structure that highlights differences from the traditional approach.

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## MSA MOVES TO BLENDED/VIRTUAL ACCREDITATION VISITS FOR FALL 2020 (CONTINUED)

All accreditation visits from mid-March 2020 through the end of the school year were, of course, postponed. Those postponed visits plus the schools originally planning to host a Fall 2020 visit have now been either scheduled for Fall 2020 or given an extension until Spring 2021 when requested.

We are pleased to confirm that we have scheduled more than 75 team visits for this fall, and are grateful to our schools' ongoing commitment to peer review as evidenced by more than 300 educators volunteering their time and expertise to serve as accreditation visitors.

Our revised blended/virtual format for visits uses both Zoom (for team meetings) and Google Drive (for document sharing, report writing, and collaboration). In addition, schools are asked to use their own video conferencing platform to set up all meetings between school stakeholders and the Visiting Team. (Note: MSA will provide a Zoom license to any school that does not already have a video conference platform.)

Revised materials for **schools** and **Visiting Teams** have been posted on the MSA website and shared directly with schools and volunteers. A helpful guide for schools and Visiting Team Chairs are the **School** and **Chair** Checklists which outline each step of the process leading up to, during, and following the visit.

We are also offering a variety of trainings for our schools and volunteers to make sure everyone is prepared for their upcoming visits. Small group online training sessions are being offered on a weekly basis.

Schools preparing to host a blended/virtual visit should attend a 90-minute **Hosting your Team Visit workshop**- an interactive session with MSA staff discussing what to expect and how to prepare to host your team virtually.

Volunteers serving as Visiting Team Members have been invited to attend a **Team Member Training for Virtual Visits**. These 90-minute small group sessions walk volunteers through the new materials and visit guidelines and translate the peer evaluation experience from the traditional onsite model to the virtual model that will be used this fall.

We are also offering small group sessions for Team Chairs and these are being arranged directly between the chairs and MSA accreditation liaison of the school being visited.

For any questions about MSA's response to COVID-19 or our new blended visit model, please contact us at [accreditation@msa-cess.org](mailto:accreditation@msa-cess.org).



Saint Elizabeth School,  
Wilmington, Del.



Mercy Career & Technical High  
School, Philadelphia, Pa.

### BACK TO SCHOOL FOR MSA SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD

Whether starting the school year virtually, in-person, or a hybrid of both, one thing is clear - MSA schools are resilient. We appreciate and recognize the significant time and planning you are putting into making sure teaching and learning continues while keeping the health and safety needs of your entire school community in mind. One size *truly* does not fit all this year as each community navigates their unique circumstances and is responsive to changing needs. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to your students, teachers, and families, and to continuous school improvement. Have a great school year!



American School of Barcelona, Spain



Chesterbrook Academy Elementary  
School-West Chester, West Chester, Pa.

## SIX NEW COMMISSIONERS JOIN MSA COMMISSIONS ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

With more than 2,600 accredited schools across the United States and in 112 other countries, MSA-CES reviews hundreds of accreditation reports each year. The final decision makers in the process are the MSA Commissioners, a representative body of our membership made up of leaders in education and business.

In addition to school accreditation actions, Commissioners also review the MSA budget, policies, and strategic planning, so in addition to school leaders, we include several public members with expertise in these areas. Commissioners are elected for a three year term, which is renewable for a second term.

The slate of six nominees was sent to the full membership for a vote over the last two weeks. We are pleased to announce our six new Commissioners who will join the full Commissions at their next meeting in early November. For a full list of our current Commissioners [click here](#).

### Commission on Elementary Schools (CES)



[Suzanna Jemsby](#) is the head of Washington International School in Washington, D.C. Dr. Jemsby has extensive experience in schools in the U.S. and overseas, and has served on accreditation visits at a number of international schools. As a multilingual international educator, Dr. Jemsby will join the PK-12 Membership and Accreditation Committee of the Commission, which reviews many international and independent school reports.



[Timothy Purnell, Ed.D.](#), CEO of NEXT for Autism, brings a strong history of leadership in both schools and educational organizations. Dr. Purnell is a former National Superintendent of the Year, with expertise in implementing system-wide initiatives and programs in mental health and trauma, as well as learning differences. As a Public Member (not representing a member school) Dr. Purnell will join the Finance and Policy Committees of the Commission.



[John Sturges](#), former President and Managing Director of a New Jersey based business consulting firm for more than three decades, and board member of a number of businesses and community organizations. Mr. Sturges brings significant expertise in human resources, finance and investments. A former MSA Commissioner, Mr. Sturges will join the Commission again as a member of the Finance and Policy Committee of the Commission.

### REGISTER FOR AN UPCOMING TRAINING!

MSA-CES offers a series of workshops to prepare you for every step of the accreditation cycle from Organizing for Self-Study to Completing your Mid-Term Report.

All workshops are being held online for Fall 2020.

[Click here](#) to learn more and sign up today!

### Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS)



[Jennifer Beckwith, Ph.D.](#), Founding Director of the American United School Kuwait, has extensive experience leading schools across Europe and the Middle East. In addition to volunteering as an accreditation team chair, Dr. Beckwith holds leadership positions in international education associations and is a founding member of the Diversity Collaborative with ISS. Dr. Beckwith will join the PK-12 Membership and Accreditation Committee of the Commission, which reviews many international and independent school reports.

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## 6 NEW COMMISSIONERS JOIN MSA COMMISSIONS ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)



Ron Davis, Ed.D. is the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education at Mt. Lebanon School District in Pennsylvania. Dr. Davis has taught for and served as a mentor for aspiring principals, and is a frequent accreditation team leader for MSA. Dr. Davis will join the Membership and Accreditation Committee of the Commission which reviews accreditation reports for all secondary schools.



Christopher C. Irving, Ed.D., Superintendent of Teaneck Public Schools, has extensive leadership experience in both schools and government in New Jersey. Dr. Irving has a background in workforce development and research and university lecturing experience in public policy and africana studies. Dr. Irving will also join the Membership and Accreditation Committee of the Commission.

### CALLING ALL EDUCATORS:

While COVID-19 travel restrictions are limiting many opportunities for professional development and collaboration, our accreditation teams are up and running! We invite you to serve as a peer reviewer on a virtual school visit from the comfort and safety of your own home or school.

[Learn more here](#) or by emailing David Sisbarro, Director of Volunteer Services at [dsisbarro@msa-cess.org](mailto:dsisbarro@msa-cess.org).

## MSA RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL ACCREDITOR

The U.S. Department of Education has recognized the Middle States Association Commission on Secondary Schools nationwide as an institutional accreditor for Career and Technical programs. Middle States had previously been recognized as a regional accreditor serving the Mid-Atlantic region.

This means that postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions across the country may use Middle States accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV student loan programs for adult students.

Just as important, it also means that CT centers nationwide will now have the opportunity to become part of an elite network of Middle States member schools that shares a commitment to continuous growth and improvement.

Middle States accreditation offers a protocol specifically developed to meet the unique needs of career and technical schools.

Through Middle States accreditation, member schools demonstrate they meet a defined set of research-based performance standards that ensure accountability and advance student achievement.

The standards measure quality through performance criteria such as program completion rate, student job placement rate, licensing examination pass rate, and student loan default rate.

Additionally, Middle States is able to accredit schools with both secondary and postsecondary programs as part of one self-study and evaluation visit, saving time and money. The protocol evaluates both technical and academic programs in the same self-study and evaluation process, encouraging alignment and integration of those programs.

Earlier this month, Middle States hosted a webinar for CT schools interested in learning more about accreditation. To watch a recording of the webinar, [click here](#).



## HAPPY RETIREMENT TO AUGUSTO "AUGIE" HERNANDEZ

Associate Vice President of Accreditation Augusto "Augie" Hernandez retired this summer after 10 years with Middle States. Augie served as accreditation liaison to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and has been affiliated with Middle States since 1985, when he first volunteered to serve on a peer review team.

Prior to joining Middle States, Augie was the director and general administrator for Immaculate Conception Academy in Mayagüez, PR.

Augie was a valued member of the Middle States team and a strong proponent of accreditation. He was deeply committed to supporting schools throughout their accreditation cycle and developing future volunteer leaders.

Please join Middle States in wishing Augie well in his retirement.



## WELCOME TO HENRY MCCORKLE



Middle States is pleased to welcome Henry McCorkle as our new director of Global Membership. Prior to joining Middle States in July, Henry served as the community development manager for the American Cancer Society. In his new role, Henry is responsible for helping to promote the value of accreditation and grow the Middle States network of accredited schools. Schools interested in becoming accredited with Middle States may contact Henry at [hmccorkle@msa-cess.org](mailto:hmccorkle@msa-cess.org) or 207.751.3052.

## MSA SCHOOLS ARE RESILIENT: SUBMIT YOUR VIDEOS

At Middle States, we have watched with pride as your schools have adapted and grown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this ever-changing landscape, your ability to serve your educational community and uphold your commitment to ongoing school improvement shows great resilience.

Middle States would like to recognize that resilience and showcase your successes with the Middle States community.

Send us a one- to three- minute video that demonstrates how your school is staying resilient, and we will select the top three to highlight in our newsletter, on social media and in other materials. All participants will be recognized for their submissions.

Submit your video along with your name, school name and contact information to Shoshana Kohn, Communications Manager at [skohn@msa-cess.org](mailto:skohn@msa-cess.org). The deadline for submissions is Dec. 1.

As the school year begins, whether your school meets in person, virtually, or a hybrid of both, we cannot wait to see how you continue to thrive and reach your goals!



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