



## MAKE THIS YOUR YEAR TO GO FOR THE GOLD!

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

The Olympics this summer should have inspired each of us to do our best.

But as the Olympic flame goes out and our attention shifts to the more immediate demands of operating our schools, it is easy to lose that inspiration and forget the lessons that can be learned from every Olympic athlete, including those that medaled this year and those who valiantly tried and will try again in 2020.

The Olympic spirit may not at first appear to have much to do with school improvement, but if you listened carefully to the interviews with the participating athletes there is a striking similarity.

Every successful athlete, regardless of the event, exhibited a focus on the task at hand and the ability to imagine themselves as being the best. Each athlete carefully monitored their performance to learn what they did best and where their performance needed to improve. All Olympians exhibited the long term commitment required to becoming the best and persistently pursued a plan of action to achieve those results. And every champion was part of a team that helped them achieve their dream.

The example of this summer's premier athletes should inspire every educator to approach the new school year like an Olympic champion. We should all focus on having our best year ever, realistically assess how we are doing, continuously working toward doing better and working as a team to do what it is we need to do to out perform our school's previous best.

These principles are at the core of the Middle States accreditation process and why our motto, "school improvement through accreditation", succinctly expresses the value added by our process.

While our efforts may not attract the same glory as Olympic gold, continuously striving to do our best as educators provides a golden opportunity for every student to achieve their personal best.



Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

## RAISING THE BAR: THE HILLSIDE SCHOOL

Accreditation has always been important to The Hillside School, an independent K-8 school founded 34 years ago to help children with language-based learning disabilities reach their full potential.

"We've always been accredited through Middle States," said Donna Henry, Head of School. "It's something we take seriously and work diligently to accomplish."

Recently, the school achieved reaccreditation through the *Sustaining Excellence* protocol, which Henry said was a perfect fit for Hillside because of its focus on action research. Hillside's research is focusing on effective writing instruction for students



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The Hillside School

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Chairman, MSA-CSS & MSA  
Board of Trustees Member

● A Model for Success:  
ACS Athens

## IS YOUR SCHOOL SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE?

The Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, offers leading schools a different path to reaccreditation through the *Sustaining Excellence* protocol.

Under the *Sustaining Excellence* protocol, rather than complete a traditional self-study for reaccreditation, leading schools have the option to focus their time, energy and resources on developing, implementing and sharing an action research project for achieving their goals.

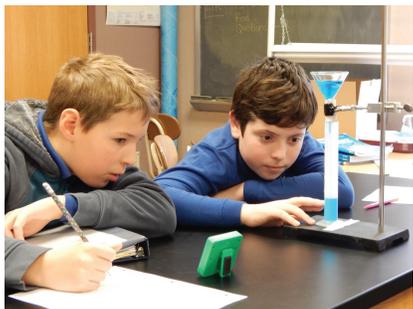
Schools that wish to use the Middle States *Sustaining Excellence* Protocol for reaccreditation must demonstrate they meet the following criteria:

- Strong evidence that it is and has been effective in growing, improving, and/or sustaining student performance, especially in academics, over time;
- A demonstrated history of continuous accreditation by the Middle States Association or another recognized accrediting agency;
- A history of excellent accreditation results free from monitoring issues and/or stipulations; and
- Can provide evidence that it meets the requirements of the 12 Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

To learn more about the *Sustaining Excellence* protocol call 267.284.5000 or e-mail [info@msa-cess.org](mailto:info@msa-cess.org).

## RAISING THE BAR: THE HILLSIDE SCHOOL (continued)

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with language-based learning disabilities.

Additionally, the colloquium component required under *Sustaining Excellence* fits with the school's goals.

"One of our goals is not only to be a leader in the field of learning disabilities, but to also educate the broader community about them," Henry said.

Students attending Hillside, located in Lower Macungie, Pa., come from over 20 school districts and nine counties. While bright and creative, Hillside students may experience a range of language-based disabilities.

"Hillside students are intelligent children who learn differently than their peers and therefore need a different approach to match their learning style," Henry said.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MSA?

Middle States representatives will be presenting workshops on how to organize and conduct a self-study at the Fall Leadership Conference of the Near East South Asia (NESAs) Council in Doha, Qatar in October and at the Annual Teachers and Administrators Conference of the Mediterranean Association of International Schools (MAIS) in Rome, Italy in November.

For more information and to register, visit our website at [msa-cess.org](http://msa-cess.org).

Hillside provides students differentiated and explicit, multi-sensory programs delivered in a small group setting of eight students per class. Students acquire the ability to understand their own unique learning needs and are challenged to learn "how to learn."

An emphasis on demystifying individual learning profiles and securing the tools and strategies essential for success as life-long learners are key to the Hillside mission.

"When we see students finally feel the joy in learning, that's the best," Henry said.

## Q & A WITH CRAIG TICE, CHAIRMAN, MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND MIDDLE STATES BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER



*The Superintendent of the Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District in New York shares his thoughts on accreditation, collaboration and baseball.*

Q. Why did you choose a career in education?

A. I was inspired at a young age by talented educators who challenged me to do my best. As a beginning chemistry and biology teacher, I tried to emulate their abilities to make complex scientific concepts easy to understand. I taught in the science department at my former high school and am fortunate to have worked alongside my former teachers whom I consider mentors, advocates, colleagues and friends.

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

A. The accreditation process provides a wonderful opportunity to encourage collaboration and build capacity among the staff to promote a model of continuous school improvement. The long-term residual benefit is not the accreditation certificate itself but rather the collaborative teamwork of the administrators, faculty, and staff that leads to more pride and ownership in the entire school.

### A MODEL FOR SUCCESS: ACS ATHENS

The American Community School (ACS) of Athens in Greece is one of the first Middle States member schools to achieve accreditation using the *Sustaining Excellence* Protocol.

The school community conducted research in seven focus areas, with the goal of improving student learning and creating engaged and caring global citizens who can contribute to the greater good of families, schools, communities, countries and the world.

Teachers and school leaders shared the results of their research during a highly successful two-day colloquium this past spring. In addition, 27 members of the professional staff used their action research as the basis for academic articles collected in the text [Revolutionizing K-12 Blended Learning through the i<sup>2</sup>Flex Classroom Model](#), published in June, 2016.

Learn how ACS Athens employed action research and the *Sustaining Excellence* Protocol to create a transformative learning experience by viewing a video series from the colloquium shared on the Middle States website at [www.msa-cess.org](http://www.msa-cess.org).

Also visit the website to read a recent Business Partners magazine article featuring Stefanos Gialamas, Ph.D., President of ACS Athens.



“Sustaining Excellence is a dynamic approach, at the heart of which lies improving student learning.”

– Stefanos Gialamas, Ph.D.,  
President, ACS Athens

Q. Who inspires you and why?

A. My wife inspires me. We both defended our dissertations and earned our doctoral degrees in the same year all while raising three young children. She has been my friend, soulmate, my inspiration, and closest professional colleague.

Q. What advice do you have for teachers returning to the classroom this year?

A. As educators, we must continue to be mindful of the difference between evaluation and assessment.

While it is true that evaluations can be assessments and assessments can be evaluations, it is important to remember that evaluations, at their core, are value judgments. Evaluations are designed to allow us to make comparisons to a defined standard (criterion-referenced) and/or the performance of a large population (norm-referenced) or individual (self-referenced). Assessments on the other hand are time-based feedback mechanisms that may occur before (diagnostic), during (formative), and after (summative) instruction.

In a world that appears to focus too much of its attention on evaluations, we as educators should remind ourselves of the importance of assessments and providing constructive feedback. Derived from the Latin "assidere" meaning to "sit beside," we must continue to sit beside our students and to support them with regular and specific feedback so they can fulfill their potential.

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# Q & A WITH CRAIG TICE, CHAIRMAN, MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND MIDDLE STATES BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER

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Q. What is your favorite book and why?

A. My favorite book is actually a series entitled Teacher to Teacher: Project S.H.A.R.E., which stands for Studies Highlighting the Action Research of Educators. The nine-volume set of action research journals contained articles by faculty members and administrators from the Marcellus Central School District, where I was superintendent. Distributed to the faculty and staff, it helped to reduce the insularity of the classroom by allowing teachers to collaborate and learn from one another.

Q. What is one thing that may surprise people about you?

A. In spite of the fact that I grew up in Webster, N.Y., I am a huge Cincinnati Reds fan.

Q. What is one thing that you have learned along the way that you would like to share with others?

A. I have been fortunate to have been mentored by many wonderful people during my career. All of them reminded me that upon being promoted, I should never forget what it was like to work in that former job.

To that end, I have always remembered that education is an enterprise that depends on collaboration.

The prefix "co-" means together, jointly, or mutually. I hope all educators are able to work collaboratively, promote open communication, establish connections, encourage cooperation, foster collegiality, engage in meaningful conversations, make contributions, and remain committed to one of the noblest professions on the planet.

## MSA Pride

Congratulations to our MSA accredited schools for being recognized locally and nationally as leading schools!

**39** of **50** *Philadelphia Business Journal*  
Ranked Independent Schools in region

&

Newsweek  
Top 100  
Schools in US

- Union County Magnet HS
- Academy of Allied Health and Science
- High Technology HS
- Academy for Allied Health Sciences (Union County)
- Academy for Information Technology
- Communications HS
- Westfield HS
- Summit HS
- Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science
- Holmdel HS

## SEND US YOUR VOLUNTEERS!

One of the most important aspects of the Middle States accreditation process is the peer review. In fact, we believe so strongly in the power of peer review that volunteering for a visiting team is required for schools to maintain accreditation.

If you are an accredited school, please submit information for your volunteers by logging on to your school profile today!

Questions? Contact Director of Volunteer Services Irene Raatzs at [iraatzs@msa-cess.org](mailto:iraatzs@msa-cess.org) or 609.526.2975.

Keep an eye out this fall for an email request for you to complete the annual update of your school's profile.



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