

# THE STANDARD



SPRING 2020

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT

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

As the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, I hope all of you, along with your family and friends, are staying healthy and safe.

On behalf of the Middle States family, I want to thank you for doing everything that you can to ensure that your students continue to receive a quality education even under these most difficult circumstances.

While the virus may have changed how many schools are delivering education right now, it has not changed the commitment to your students that you carry forth each and every day - a commitment that has always extended beyond the walls of the classroom, in good times and in bad.

Thank you.

Though here at Middle States we have been forced to postpone all previously scheduled accreditation visits through May, our services and office operations remain uninterrupted as our staff continues to work remotely. In addition, I am pleased to report that our commission-

ers held a virtual meeting last week to vote on accreditation actions for 101 schools in the United States and around the globe.

We look forward to sharing more information with you soon regarding how MSA-CESS processes, particularly our peer review visit, are adapting and innovating to best meet the changing needs of our schools and society in the coming months, and into the future.

I am grateful to both our staff and our commissioners for their contributions and continued hard work throughout this crisis, and am proud that even during these challenging times we are able to carry on our legacy of serving schools for more than 130 years.

In closing, I wish you and your school communities good health and thank you again for all that you do for students around the world.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Marie McCauley EdD CPA*  
Lisa Marie McCauley, Ed.D.

### Also In This Issue:

- Middle States' Response to COVID-19 Pandemic
- Two Schools Awarded Programs of Distinction
- Congratulations to Our Newly Accredited & Reaccredited Schools
- Inaugural CTE Forum
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## MIDDLE STATES RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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In response to continued school closures and the projected timelines for resuming normal travel and school operations, we have deemed it necessary to postpone all previously scheduled accreditation visits through May. All schools and volunteers impacted by this decision have been contacted directly.

All previously scheduled onsite workshops have been moved to an online format. A full list of upcoming self study workshops can be found [here](#). A full list of accreditation volunteer trainings can be found [here](#).

In addition, we held our first two MSAConnects open forum town halls for our school leaders to share their experience, advice, and concerns. Nearly 200 school leaders from around the world participated.

One of the main themes that emerged from the meetings was the importance of communication. It may sound like a simple theme, but whether it be disseminating information, supporting positive mental health, instructing online or providing social connections and outlets - quality education has never been more important.

We will be offering additional forums for sharing and additional resources based on these initial discussions. We will post and share details as soon as they are available. We are also continually updating our library of resources for online learning on our website.

To view the recording of our April 3 discussion [click here](#) and for our April 7 discussion [click here](#).

Please reach out directly to your accreditation liaison or any member of our staff for any questions that arise or support you need. You can also always reach us at [accreditation@msa-cess.org](mailto:accreditation@msa-cess.org)



### A SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR GRADUATING SENIORS!

How is your school celebrating  
your seniors as you navigate  
coronavirus restrictions?  
Share with us @msaaccredited.  
#allinthistogether

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY ACCREDITED & REACCREDITED SCHOOLS!

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We are pleased to announce that 101 schools and school systems in 12 states as well as Puerto Rico and 14 other countries have earned accreditation or reaccreditation, the gold standard for measuring and advancing school improvement.

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

## MIDDLE STATES RECOGNIZES TWO SCHOOLS FOR PROGRAMS OF DISTINCTION



Country Day School

The Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools recently recognized the Saint Jane Frances de Chantal School in Easton, Pa., and Country Day School in San Rafael, Costa Rica, for Programs 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.

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

The Early Childhood Program of Distinction recognizes a school's dedication to early childhood education through a rich, child-centered philosophy and best practices focusing on exploration, questioning, creativity and social-emotional development as well as literacy and numeracy.

"Country Day School is honored to be recognized by Middle States for our Early Childhood Education program," said Director Scott Adams, Ed.D. "Our curriculum is designed to stimulate creativity, self-expression, fine and gross motor skills, and social interaction, while nurturing the development of the whole child through playful inquiry."



St. Janes School

St. Jane School Principal Marybeth Okula said:

"We are so proud of our pre-K and kindergarten. Our child centered classrooms promote a stimulating and challenging environment where children can grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically as well as spiritually. Through play and concrete learning, our program prepares children for meeting success in later educational experiences."

To learn more about Middle States Programs of Distinction, [click here](#).

## MIDDLE STATES HOSTS INAUGURAL FORUM FOR EXCELLENCE IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools hosted its first Forum for Excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE) in February bringing together career and technical educators from throughout the tri-state region to share ideas and hear from experts in the field.

The one-day forum was led by Accreditation Vice President Glen Mort, Ed.D., and provided an opportunity for educators to take a step back to assess how far career and technical education has come and where it's going.

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MSA-CESS Leadership Team: Glen Mort, Ed.D., Vice President Accreditation; Lisa Marie McCauley, Ed.D., President; Kelly Christian, Vice President Operations

It also served as an important reminder about how in today's rapidly changing world, career and technical education offers a clear pathway to success for so many students.

The forum featured a panel discussion involving four CTE school directors and Middle States commissioners: Jay Fund, James Kraft, Ed.D., Frank Preston and Frank Whelan, and also included talks on legislative and regulatory practices focused around financial aid and career education, and the value of providing students with opportunities to pursue certification in their field.

Keynote Speaker Steve Gunderson, president and CEO of Career Education Colleges and Universities, highlighted the future of postsecondary career education.

For access to the presentations, please visit our website.



Middle States Commissioners James Kraft, Ed.D., Jay Fund, Frank Preston, Frank Whelan and Clayton Petry



MSA-CESS Vice President of Accreditation, Glen Mort, Ed.D. and keynote speaker Steve Gunderson, President and CEO, Career Education Colleges and Universities



MSA-CESS staff members Leslie Green and David Sisbarro welcome participants



## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

Accreditation Vice President Glen R. Mort, Ed.D. addressed the importance of career and technical education and Middle States accreditation in a recent op-ed in The Philadelphia Inquirer. Read it here.

# Q&A WITH VOLUNTEER TEAM LEADER SISTER ROSE DIFLURI



Sister Rose DiFluri is assistant superintendent of schools of the Diocese of Camden and a longtime volunteer with Middle States. Sr. Rose joined the Diocese of Camden in 1995, and one of her early responsibilities was to oversee the accreditation process with Middle States.

Sr. Rose has chaired over 20 accreditation teams in her volunteer career, primarily in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

## Q. How has your school community adjusted to distance learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. Teachers are using Zoom to deliver classroom lessons, as well as to meet one-on-one with students who may be having difficulty. Each student is participating in a minimum of four instructional hours of learning a day. This is the case in all grades, kindergarten through 12. With many parents working remotely from home as well, they are present to monitor their children and keep them on task while they are “in school.”

## Q. What are you doing to help students and teachers stay connected during this time?

A. The principals of the schools are helping to keep the teachers focused and are encouraging them with positive feedback. They are holding faculty meetings via Zoom once a week. Parents are pleased and grateful for the time and effort the teachers are devoting to make the lessons meaningful and profitable for their children. Parents have observed that “it is not just busy work,” but rather real lessons which are implementing the curriculum just as if they were in school.

## Q. How did you choose a career in education and what do you find most rewarding?

A. I can’t remember a time as I was going through school myself that I didn’t want to be a teacher. That was the root of it all. Once I got to college and started taking education courses, I realized I wanted not just

to be a teacher, but to also to lead Catholic schools. I wanted to plant seeds in teachers and in students that would forward the process of their lifelong learning. The most rewarding thing for me is that on a daily basis I get to impart some of my wisdom, some of what I’ve picked up along the way, to advise teachers and principals and be resources for them as they carry out their mission in their individual schools.

## Q. What made you decide to volunteer with Middle States?

A. I first became involved in 1995 when I came to my position as assistant superintendent in the Diocese of Camden. One of my responsibilities was to oversee the accreditation process in our schools. I went on team visits myself, to learn more about the process. Eventually I took the chairperson training, and I have been regularly leading teams for 20 years.

## Q. What do you think are the benefits of Middle States accreditation?

A. The way I like to think of it is that in a given school the teachers, the principal and others are there every day. There is no vantage point by which to evaluate what they’re doing. The accreditation process is not an evaluation of teachers and programs, it’s a sharing of wealth and making recommendations with new sets of eyes that aren’t entrenched in the internal every day experience.

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

A. I am an absolute devotee of daytime soap operas. I’ve been watching soaps since I was in high school when I would come home from school and my mom, who would have watched the show that day, would fill me in on what happened. Soaps are a great way to escape from reality.



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