*Note: Below you will find a sample letter for your first contact with your team members. The letter should be sent as soon as you receive the team roster from MSA.*

Dear [Names],

Welcome to the Middle States Visiting Team for [Name of School] in [School Location]. We have an interesting and exciting task ahead of us. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you and to share your professional expertise in the field of education. An accreditation visit is considered to be one of the best professional development experiences available, and although our work together will be online rather than in-person, I am confident that we will accomplish our task of leaving the school in a better position to grow.

I would like to remind you all to take a look at the Team Report Writing Training Module created by MSA. This module will help you better understand the process of writing the team report while on the visit. While this is not mandatory, I ask that you please complete it before the start date for our visit. You can find it here-

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdiSUcV5qZVC8JPm-rzR87FKiF9TdCo05XiPp8cmK1NQGGelA/viewform

I have been in communication with the leadership of [Name of School] and have a meeting scheduled with them on [Date] to discuss visit logistics [Or met with them on [Date] to discuss visit logistics]. As a part of this new blended visit model in response to the pandemic, the Chair has been assigned two of the Standards for review before the Team Visit. I will be handling the Finances and Facilities standards in advance of our visit and will provide all the details of these meetings and interviews when we meet on Zoom for the first time in a few weeks.

The team’s first event will be our orientation meeting the week before our visit; we will set the time for this meeting soon. Our Orientation meeting and all other team meetings will take place via Zoom. The school and I are currently working on setting the visit schedule which will begin on [First Day of Visit] and conclude on [Third Day of Visit]. Although we will not be together in-person, we will have full days and evenings of work together, just as we would if we were in the school and hotel. Please clear your schedule accordingly and plan to be as accessible as possible during school hours as well as in the late afternoons/evenings for team meetings and writing.

Approximately 4 weeks before our visit you will receive an email invitation from the MSA Office to access a Google shared drive which will include all team materials, the school’s self-study, supportive evidence, and video tour.

The self-study is the foundation of our evaluation. It is expected that you read and develop a basic familiarity with the contents before our visit begins. The interviews you conduct will focus on the contents of this document. You will need to know the contents as we seek to ascertain:

* the quality of the school’s planning processes,
* how well the school meets the 12 MSA Standards for Accreditation,
* the degree to which the entire school community is knowledgeable and supportive of their chosen improvement objectives,
* the quality of the strategies and action steps.

It is helpful to note questions and to highlight strengths and concerns as you read the report. If you have any questions, please know that I am available to you. Feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Enclosed is a Visiting Team Member Questionnaire. I ask that you complete and return to me by email no later than [Date]. Be sure to include which areas of the report you feel most comfortable taking the lead on. I will send you your areas of responsibility as soon as I hear from each team member. Please prepare written expectations based on what you read in the self-study. The expectations compared to what we actually see at the school will be the basis for our discussions. Each of us will be expected to contribute insights to each area of the team report.

If you have not already done so, please sign up to attend a MSA Team Member Training for Virtual Visits- a 90 minute online training that will give you the information needed to be successful on our visit using this new virtual format. You can sign up at a convenient time for you by following this link: https://www.msa-cess.org/default.aspx?RelID=1076024814. If you have never served on a Visiting Team before, please view the 30 minute “Introduction to Serving on a Visiting Team” first (found at the same link).

Thank you for your willingness to serve on this team. I look forward to meeting you at our first video meeting and hope that this will prove to be a rewarding experience for you both professionally and personally.

Sincerely,