

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF  
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**



**STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION  
for  
SCHOOLS**

**with Accreditation Terms and Actions**

**February 2007**

**Commission on Elementary Schools**

**Commission on Secondary Schools**

**Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation**

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Commission on Elementary Schools  
Commission on Secondary Schools

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## INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) was established in 1887 and is a nongovernmental, nonprofit, peer-administered organization. MSA provides leadership in school improvement for its member schools in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

MSA has three accrediting commissions:

- The Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) serves academic, degree-granting institutions and evaluates and accredits post-secondary institutions and programs.
- The Commission on Secondary Schools (MSCSS) evaluates and accredits institutions providing middle and/or secondary education, including vocational-technical schools that offer non-degree-granting post-secondary programs.
- The Commission on Elementary Schools (MSCES) serves institutions that provide middle, elementary, and early age education.

A joint Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation (CIWA) acts on behalf of MSCES and MSCSS to evaluate and recommend the granting of accreditation for those institutions providing early age through grade 12 education or any combination of grade levels served by **both** the Commission on Elementary Schools and the Commission on Secondary Schools.

### ***THE ROLE OF STANDARDS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS***

Middle States accreditation standards are qualitative statements that reflect research-based best practices for schools. These standards complement content area standards, which designate what students are expected to learn in various curriculum areas. The latter may be incorporated in the accreditation process in a variety of ways, but because content standards vary among schools and states, it is not possible to designate a single set of content standards for all Middle States accredited schools.

Middle States accreditation standards have several important functions in the accreditation process. Most importantly, they serve as a school improvement mechanism. Because they are based on research and reflect best practices, they serve as a qualitative guide to expectations for an accredited school. The standards are not designed to make all schools look alike. The Middle States accreditation process respects the individual nature and character of each school. The diversity of Middle States member schools reflects this important principle. Although standards for each school are the same, there are significant differences in the ways schools adhere to them.

Standards are used to make accreditation decisions by the Commissions with input from their advisory committees, readers, and staffs in various ways, depending on the self-study protocol selected by the school. The same set of standards is used with all protocols to provide a consistent model of quality. By no means do standards determine what schools *must* look like.

The two Middle States Commissions and CIWA offer many self-study protocols. Each protocol requires a distinct use of the standards. For all protocols, the Commissions and schools use the standards to determine candidacy. This first stage of the process determines the school's ability and readiness to engage in a rigorous accreditation protocol.

Many schools, especially at the elementary levels, are encouraged to use self-study instruments that are based on a coherence theory of evaluation. This self-study evaluation model requires the school to define itself rather than respond to pre-set criteria. The visiting team then uses the self-definition as a lens to determine whether the nature and quality of the students' experiences in the school are consistent with those called for in the self-definition. The visiting team provides the school with a critique to strengthen the school's ability to move forward. Trained readers apply the standards after carefully analyzing the school's self-study and the visiting team's report. The coherence of these documents *and* adherence to standards leads to the Commission's decision on accreditation.

Increasingly, schools elect to use a strategic planning self-study protocol or one of the numerous collaborative protocols designed by cooperating accreditation agencies that have been approved by both Commissions. In these cases, the school addresses the standards during the self-study phase and determines its own degree of adherence to the standards. Many schools utilize the standards as a school improvement tool against which to judge development and performance. In these cases, the visiting team applies the standards during the visit and provides specific judgments in a written report on major strengths and areas for improvement. The staff, in addition to a reader and/or an advisory committee, provides an additional review of the standards.

The Commissions make final accreditation determinations based on recommendations from this review process. The Commissions conduct multiple levels of review to ensure a consistent, informed, and fair decision regarding accreditation is made.

## ***THE ROLE OF INDICATORS OF QUALITY IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS***

Indicators have been developed for each standard. Neither the indicators nor the standards are to be used as a checklist. Rather, the indicators should amplify a standard and show possible ways that a school, evaluator, advisory committee, or reader can demonstrate that a particular standard is met. Indicators provide greater clarity regarding best practices for each standard. Schools and evaluators are encouraged to expand upon the indicators in order to emphasize unique characteristics of each school.

The Middle States members represent a highly diverse group of schools. The accreditation standards serve as expectations for quality in a school and as guidelines for school improvement through planning and future development. The indicators provide multiple ways to apply standards. Although it is expected that all accredited schools will meet the standards, not all indicators will apply to or be appropriate for each school. It is imperative that the use of indicators respect the individual integrity of each school and that no attempt to conform a school's operation to these indicators be made.

## **THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION—2007**

**I**t is the policy of the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools and the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools to review periodically and revise, as necessary, the Standards for Accreditation of Schools. The most recent review took place over a three-year period culminating with the adoption of revised standards by both Commissions in February 2007.

The Revised Standards of 2007 will be used by the Commissions as a basis for accreditation actions beginning with schools hosting evaluation visits in September 2008. Therefore, schools conducting their self-study in 2007-2008 in preparation for an evaluation visit in September 2008 or thereafter should use the 2007 Standards for their self-assessment of the degree to which they meet the Standards.

### ***CHANGES REFLECTED IN THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION—2007***

As stated in the Introduction, the Standards for Accreditation are qualitative statements that reflect research-based best practices for schools. Therefore, the Standards must be reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to reflect research-based best practices. As a result, most of the changes in the 2007 Standards were made to reflect the most current, research-supported best practices expected in quality schools.

Other changes to be found in the 2007 Standards are:

- The titles of several Standards have been changed—
  - Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs and/or Objectives is now Philosophy/Mission
  - Organizational Design and Staff is now School Climate and Organization
  - Learning Media Services and Technology is now Information Resources and Technology
  - Assessment of Student Learning is now Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning
  - Planning is now School Improvement Planning
- All of the Standards and most of the Indicators have been restated to achieve greater meaning and clarity in the intent and requirements.
- Indicators for early age programs and schools that deliver all or part of their education program by distance education have been added
- The Indicators have been numbered to provide an easy reference

What have not changed in the 2007 Standards are the areas of a school's programs and operations on which they focus. There are still twelve Standards for Accreditation, and they address every aspect of a school's education program, its services, and activities and all of the foundational elements necessary for a quality education program.

## ***IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION—2007***

The Commission on Secondary Schools will begin to use the 2007 version of the Standards for Accreditation as a basis for its accreditation actions beginning on January 1, 2009. Therefore, the 2007 version of the Standards for Accreditation will apply to all schools entering self-study beginning September 1, 2007 and that host a visiting team beginning on September 1, 2008 and thereafter.

### ***ORGANIZATION OF THE STANDARDS***

The Standards and Indicators of Quality are numbered for ease of reference only. No added weight or other significance should be attributed to those numbers. Additionally, the Standards are organized in two broad categories based on the following:

Foundational Standards: Standards addressing best practices in the components of a school that provide the *foundations* for quality in the education program, services, and results in terms of student learning.

- Standard 1: Philosophy/Mission
- Standard 2: Governance and Leadership
- Standard 3: School Improvement Planning
- Standard 4: Finances
- Standard 5: Facilities
- Standard 6: School Climate and Organization

Operational Standards: Standards addressing best practices in delivering the education program, services, and activities to the students.

- Standard 7: Health and Safety
- Standard 8: Educational Program
- Standard 9: Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning
- Standard 10: Student Services
- Standard 11: Student Life and Student Activities
- Standard 12: Information Resources and Technology

# GLOSSARY

The following terms used in the Standards for Accreditation have specific meanings as defined here:

**Academic Standards** – Expectations for what students are expected to know and to be able to do with what they know in the content areas included in the educational program.

**Accreditation Standards** – Qualitative statements that reflect research-based best practices for schools.

**Distance Education** – Education that uses, as its primary mode of instructional delivery, an alternative to traditional classroom-based instruction, such as via the Internet, mailed correspondence, or fax.

**Early Age Education** – A program serving families and their children from infancy through age six years in settings such as schools and early childhood centers.

**Facilities** – A school’s building(s), grounds, furnishings, equipment, and vehicles.

**Families** – Parents, guardians, caregivers, or others in a custodial relationship with a learner.

**Governance** – The group or individuals charged with overseeing the direction of the school; may be a governing body, board of trustees, board of education, advisory committee, or some other configuration.

**Information Resources** – Electronic, print, and other media, as well as interactive learning materials available through a library, in the classroom, or in the wider community that complement course materials and textbooks and enhance the educational program.

**Stakeholders** – Individuals or groups that have a stake in the future of the school; may be school leaders, teachers, members of the staff, students, families, governing bodies, community members, alumni, business partners, and others.

**Leadership** – The head of the school and school system, members of the administrative staff of the school and school system, and all others in administrative positions.

**Long-Range Plan** – A plan that assumes that the future is fixed and already known; a plan not based on a vision of what the future might or could be but, instead, focused on improving existing systems. The locus of control in long range planning is often external to the organization.

**Mission** – The unifying theme or vision that illuminates the reason for the school’s existence, the audience that it serves, and its distinctive character.

**Philosophy** – The expression of beliefs about the nature of the learner and the processes and relationships that should exist within the school to positively affect learning.

**Quality** – A level of excellence expected by the school’s stakeholders and respected by the larger community.

**Related Services** – Services that respond to the needs of identified students with special education needs such as speech-language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other specialized services.

**School** – Any type of educational organization seeking school accreditation.

**Strategic Plan** – A plan based on the principle that the locus of control is inside the organization, because planning is based on the organization’s vision of a preferred future; plan that assumes that, as a human organization, the institution has the ability to exercise control over external factors and can create the future; plan that creates a desired reality and outlines the actions to be taken to obtain that reality.

**Student Support Services** – Services, or referrals to services, that address the emotional, physical, and social needs of students, and as appropriate involve their families, including guidance and counseling, speech-language services, occupational therapy, and physical therapy.

# **THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

## **STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY/MISSION**

The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school's philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

## **STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

## **STANDARD 3: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school's philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

## **STANDARD 4: FINANCES**

Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes is dedicated to the school's operations.

## **STANDARD 5: FACILITIES**

School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

## **STANDARD 6: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION**

The school's organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

## **STANDARD 7: HEALTH AND SAFETY**

A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.

## **STANDARD 8: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school's mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

## **STANDARD 9: ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING**

The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

## **STANDARD 10: STUDENT SERVICES**

The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.

## **STANDARD 11: STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

The school provides access to non-discriminatory student activities that are age- and developmentally appropriate to supplement the educational program. A balance of academic, social, co- or extra-curricular and service activities is maintained. Student activities are selected to foster intellectual, cultural, and social growth as well as physical health and wellness. Student activities provide opportunities for student leadership and social interaction and encourage development of student interests. These activities are adequately financed, periodically reviewed by stakeholders, managed by school governance and leadership, and appropriate to the school's philosophy/mission.

## **STANDARD 12: INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY**

Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school's pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

# THE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION WITH INDICATORS OF QUALITY

## STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY/MISSION

**The Standard:** The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school's philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

### *Indicators for all schools:*

- 1.1 The school takes steps to ensure that students and their families understand and support the school's philosophy/mission.
- 1.2 The philosophy/mission is consistent with ethical norms and demonstrates respect for persons of all races, creeds, and cultures.
- 1.3 The philosophy/mission is free of contradiction, ambiguity, and excessive abstraction.
- 1.4 The school implements a system to assess its effectiveness in fulfilling its philosophy/mission.
- 1.5 The school's philosophy/mission is clearly communicated in its brochures, promotional materials, policy and procedural handbooks, web site, and similar resources.

## **STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

**The Standard:** The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

### ***Indicators for independent/non-public schools:***

#### **Governance and Leadership**

- 2.1 The governance and leadership work cooperatively to establish and maintain clear, written policies and procedures that are consistent with the school's philosophy/mission. These policies and procedures are implemented at all times and reviewed regularly.
- 2.2 The governance and leadership provide appropriate opportunities for education of the trustees/board, including orientation and training sessions so that all members understand their responsibilities and roles.
- 2.3 The governance and leadership appropriately recognize the accomplishments of staff and students.
- 2.4 No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and any corporate linkages in ownership/governance are expressed as enforceable agreements.

#### **Governance**

- 2.5 The governance provides the school with effective leadership, support, and continuity, including succession planning to ensure stability of the school's leadership.
- 2.6 The governance thinks and acts strategically, reflecting on its decisions and the consequences of its actions.
- 2.7 The governance systematically evaluates its own effectiveness in performing its duties.
- 2.8 The governance is focused on selection, evaluation, and support of the head of the school; policy development; planning; assessing the school's performance; and ensuring the availability of adequate resources to accomplish the school's philosophy/mission.
- 2.9 Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the leadership to conduct the daily operation of the school.
- 2.10 The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the school. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the school.

## **Leadership**

- 2.11 The head of the school is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.
- 2.12 The leadership ensures that all school programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
- 2.13 The leadership ensures that professional and support staff members stay well informed about educational developments.
- 2.14 The leadership undertakes operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the school's mission and goals.
- 2.15 The leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.
- 2.16 The school leadership maintains appropriate and constructive relations with families, students, staff, the community, and with each other in the interest of serving the needs of the students.

### ***Indicators for schools in public school districts, archdiocesan/diocesan systems, and other school organizations with a central office staff:***

## **Governance**

- 2.17 The governance works cooperatively to establish and maintain clearly formulated written policies and procedures that are consistent with the school's philosophy/mission. The policies and procedures are implemented and reviewed regularly.
- 2.18 No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and any corporate linkages in ownership/governance are expressed as enforceable agreements.
- 2.19 The governance provides appropriate opportunities for education of the trustees/board, including orientation and training sessions so that all members understand their responsibilities and roles.
- 2.20 The governance appropriately recognizes the accomplishments of the staff and students.
- 2.21 The governance provides the school with effective leadership, support, and continuity, including succession planning to ensure stability of the school leadership.
- 2.22 The governance thinks and acts strategically, reflecting on its decisions and the consequences of its actions.
- 2.23 The governance implements a system for evaluating its own effectiveness in performing its duties.
- 2.24 The governance focuses its activities on selecting, evaluating, and supporting the head of the school system, policy development, planning, assessing the organization's performance, and ensuring adequate resources to accomplish the organization's philosophy/mission.
- 2.25 Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the leadership to conduct the daily operation of the school system.
- 2.26 The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the school system. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the organization.

### **Central Office Leadership**

- 2.27 The head of the school system is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.
- 2.28 The central office leadership ensures that all school system programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
- 2.29 The central office leadership stays well informed of educational developments.
- 2.30 The central office leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.

### **School Leadership**

- 2.31 The school leadership maintains appropriate and constructive relations with families, students, staff, the community, and with each other in the interest of serving the needs of the students.
- 2.32 The school leadership undertakes operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the school's mission and goals.
- 2.33 The head of the school is accountable to the governance and is responsible for ensuring expected levels of student performance.
- 2.34 The school leadership ensures that all school programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
- 2.35 The school leadership ensures that members of the professional and support staffs stay well informed of educational developments.
- 2.36 The school leadership adheres to appropriate guidelines concerning confidentiality in communications.

### ***Indicator for schools that provide distance education:***

- 2.37 The school's leadership includes personnel with expertise in distance education methodologies.

## **STANDARD 3: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

**The Standard:** The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school's philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

### ***Indicators for all schools:***

- 3.1 The school's improvement plans are developed with broad-based school community participation and input.
- 3.2 Information about the school's planning processes, its improvement plans and goals, and the results of implementing the improvement plans are communicated to stakeholders and the public.
- 3.3 Improvement plans are supported by the school community and approved by the governance where appropriate.
- 3.4 Periodic external reviews validate the school's processes for strategic or long-range planning and school improvement.
- 3.5 The school can document its long-range planning for finances, facilities, and technology enhancement.
- 3.6 Improvement plans are based on an analysis of historical data, baseline performance information, trend data, and projections.
- 3.7 The school's improvement plans are reviewed periodically to determine the extent to which outcomes meet expectations so that corrective actions can be taken as needed.
- 3.8 Planners consider the capacities of its facilities, equipment, and staff before adopting new programs.

## STANDARD 4: FINANCES

**The Standard:** Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes is dedicated to the school's operations.

### *Indicators for all schools:*

- 4.1 The school implements written financial policies and procedures that are in accordance with accepted business practices.
- 4.2 The governance and leadership exercise prudent control over all financial operations.
- 4.3 Levels of income and expenditures are in appropriate balance. Current assets are sufficient to meet current liabilities.
- 4.4 Finances are currently stable and projections indicate continuing stability.
- 4.5 The school develops short- and long-range financial plans to ensure resources are available to deliver its educational program and services.
- 4.6 Stakeholders have opportunities to provide input into financial plans. The staff is involved in determining priorities for curriculum and instructional needs.
- 4.7 Families enrolling students in the school are informed in advance of all financial obligations for attending the school.
- 4.8 Those entrusted with overseeing and conducting the financial and business operations of the school possess appropriate qualifications.
- 4.9 Periodic audits or financial reviews are conducted by qualified external agencies and the school responds appropriately.
- 4.10 The school has written, reasonable, and equitable tuition, collection, and refund policies.
- 4.11 The school carries adequate insurance coverage including business interruption, casualty, property, and liability insurance for employees and the governance/owner, as appropriate.
- 4.12 The school makes prudent use of resources available through development activities, grants, foundations, and other partnerships.

## STANDARD 5: FACILITIES

**The Standard:** School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

### *Indicators for all schools:*

- 5.1 The school's facilities and equipment are appropriate for achieving its philosophy/mission and are healthy, safe, and well maintained.
- 5.2 The school plans for, funds, and schedules regular preventative measures, repairs, and maintenance of its facilities and equipment.
- 5.3 The facilities offer a variety of spaces for providing quality programs and services for all segments of the school's population and include appropriate accommodation for:
  - a. instruction
  - b. administration
  - c. conferences
  - d. student activities
  - e. student services
  - f. storage of school property
  - g. storage for student belongings
- 5.4 Sufficient systems are in place to monitor and adjust air quality to appropriate levels.
- 5.5 Lighting is adequate and appropriate in student and staff areas.
- 5.6 Sufficient space is available for ingress, egress, and traffic flow within the facilities.

## STANDARD 6: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION

**The Standard:** The school's organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

### *Indicators for independent/non-public schools:*

- 6.1 The school's design, organization, climate, and leadership support attainment of the school's philosophy/mission.
- 6.2 Designated, qualified leadership provides coordination, supervision, and direction for the educational program, student services, and student activities.
- 6.3 A logical and clear table of organization for the school includes written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
- 6.4 Administrative, instructional, and support staffs are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program, student services, and student activities.
- 6.5 Staff members, including administrators, are assigned to work based on their education, preparation, experience, expertise, and commitment to the school's success.
- 6.6 The school implements written personnel policies and procedures for the operation of the school and makes them available to all employees.
- 6.7 The school implements written policies and procedures for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment for all staff.
- 6.8 The school implements written policies and procedures for evaluating staff performance. Performance appraisals are conducted with the knowledge of the staff member and reported in writing as well as verbally. Results are used to make professional development recommendations. Staff members have an opportunity to discuss and appeal their appraisals.
- 6.9 Staff members are provided opportunities to offer input into the content of their professional development programs.
- 6.10 The school implements written policies and procedures for handling complaints/grievances by members of the staff.
- 6.11 The school implements written policies and procedures for orienting and mentoring new staff members.
- 6.12 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure that service providers not employed by the school are appropriately oriented, supervised, and supported.
- 6.13 The working environment for the staff promotes collegiality, high expectations, trust, support, and recognition for accomplishments and contributions.
- 6.14 Professional satisfaction and good general morale characterize the school's staff.
- 6.15 Staff members are committed to the school, dedicated to their work, and take pride in the outcome of their efforts.

- 6.16 The leadership encourages staff members' affiliation with professional organizations.
- 6.17 The school's families and community demonstrate commitment to, pride in, and support for the school through participation, promotion of its mission, and financial support.
- 6.18 Members of the staff, students, and their families feel safe in the school.
- 6.19 A clearly defined, written code of student conduct supports an environment that is conducive to learning and is understood by students, staff, and families. The code is enforced fairly and uniformly.

***Indicators for schools in public school districts, archdiocesan/diocesan systems, and other school organizations with a central office staff:***

- 6.20 A logical and clearly understood table of organization exists for the system of schools with written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
- 6.21 The design, organization, and climate of the system of schools support attainment of the school's philosophy/mission.
- 6.22 Administrative, instructional, and support staffs of the central office are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program, student services, and student activities.
- 6.23 Central office staff members possess the qualifications of education, preparation, experience, and commitment that contribute to the school's success. Staff members are assigned to work by reason of their training and expertise.
- 6.24 The central office's leadership and staff work cooperatively to create a climate for teaching and learning that fosters the attainment of the school's philosophy/mission.
- 6.25 The organization implements written personnel policies and procedures for the operation of the system of schools and makes them available to all employees.
- 6.26 The organization implements written policies and procedures for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment.
- 6.27 Central office leadership supports a comprehensive program of professional development for all members of the staff that addresses system-wide learning expectations and specific student needs by allocating appropriate time and resources.
- 6.28 Central office leadership encourages the school staff members' affiliation with professional organizations.

***Indicators for schools with early age programs:***

- 6.29 The school program promotes young children's positive self-identity, enhances their sense of emotional well being, supports developing social skills, and facilitates friendships.
- 6.30 Personnel policies, appraisal systems, and professional development programs explicitly focus on staff behaviors that are to be encouraged in the classroom such as teacher interactions with children, acknowledgement of age-appropriate affective development, and developmentally appropriate instructional practices.
- 6.31 The school seeks to achieve recommended ratios, group's sizes, and staff qualifications.

***Indicator for schools that provide distance education:***

- 6.32 Appropriately qualified faculty members participate in distance-learning tasks including grading student work, telephone consultation with students, academic counseling, course revision, and development of study guides.

## STANDARD 7: HEALTH AND SAFETY

**The Standard:** A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.

### *Indicators for all schools:*

- 7.1 The school has satisfactory written procedures and functional equipment with which to communicate during fire and other emergencies, to summon assistance, and to evacuate the school's facilities.
- 7.2 The school provides adequate health care at school functions that take place away from the school's premises.
- 7.3 Appropriate training is provided for all staff members on how to implement emergency and crisis plans, handle accidents and illnesses, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- 7.4 The school appropriately manages the storage and administration of student medications.
- 7.5 The school safely stores equipment and supplies.
- 7.6 A system exists to account for the whereabouts of students at all times.
- 7.7 The school maintains comprehensive, current health records for all students and staff.
- 7.8 The school conducts and maintains written records of regular emergency drills.
- 7.9 Designated members of the staff inform faculty and families (as appropriate to maintain confidentiality) about students' health or physical needs.
- 7.10 The school ensures that the staff is kept up-to-date on relevant health, wellness, and safety information and practices, including procedures to deal with individual student needs.
- 7.11 Working relationships with local authorities and health service providers are positive and ongoing.
- 7.12 The educational program includes opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary for personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle.
- 7.13 The school has an effective system to control access to the school by visitors and other non-school personnel.
- 7.14 Staff members model positive health and safety practices.
- 7.15 Safe drinking water is available throughout the day for the staff and students.

### *Indicator for schools with early age programs:*

- 7.16 Care of infants is consistent with current professional practice, especially with respect to sleeping, bottle-feeding, diapering, sanitation, nurturing, and daily interactions.

## STANDARD 8: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

**The Standard:** The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school's mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

### *Indicators for all schools:*

- 8.1 Written curriculum guides identify program objectives and define the scope and sequence of the educational program. The guides are functional, available, and in use.
- 8.2 The educational program provides instruction in the basic subject areas of language arts and literature (including early language development and literacy skills, speaking, writing, and listening communication skills), mathematics, the sciences, and social sciences.
- 8.3 The educational program includes experiences in visual and performing arts, health, world languages, and physical education.
- 8.4 The educational program provides experiences that promote students' critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving skills, and study skills.
- 8.5 The educational program includes instruction in effective uses of information technology and provides opportunities for application.
- 8.6 A variety of group learning settings (e.g., individual, small group, large group) is provided for students daily.
- 8.7 The educational program offers opportunities for development of social skills—such as increasing self-control and a sense of individual and group responsibility—in interaction with adults and peers.
- 8.8 Written curriculum and instruction policies and procedures provide direction to the staff, leadership, and other stakeholders in the development, implementation, and improvement of the educational program.
- 8.9 Provision is made for both horizontal and vertical articulation and coordination of the educational program among all levels of the school.
- 8.10 An overview of the educational program, school policies and procedures, and other pertinent information is available in written form to students and their parents.
- 8.11 The educational program defines desired student outcomes as expressed in terms of student understanding, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits.
- 8.12 Course or program objectives are simply stated and understandable to students.
- 8.13 The educational program considers the ages, cultures, and varying levels of ability of students.
- 8.14 The instructional program is designed to meet students' needs in accordance with the school's philosophy/mission.

- 8.15 The educational program and its expectations for learning are understood and supported by the school's stakeholders.
- 8.16 Curriculum development is a dynamic, emergent process influenced by the attributes and interests of the children, their families, and teachers.

***Indicators for schools with early age programs:***

- 8.17 Families have opportunities to give input into curriculum development.
- 8.18 The educational program reflects an integrated approach to children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.
- 8.19 Teachers treat the educational program as everything that happens during the day. This includes while children play and explore, eat, interact, toilet, take walks or field trips, engage in planned experiences, and are involved in transitions such as arrival, clean-up, and departure.
- 8.20 Both child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities are included in the daily plan.
- 8.21 Infants and young toddlers primarily receive individual attention and occasionally take part in small groups.
- 8.22 The educational program provides:
  - a. a balance of quiet and active times and flexibly incorporates learners' natural routines into the rhythm of the day.
  - b. daily indoor and outdoor play with a balance between large-muscle and small-muscle as well as organized and unstructured experiences.
  - c. early language development and literacy skills through such activities as conversation, storytelling, singing, poetry, finger plays, games, puppets, pretend play, shared reading of picture books, and other meaningful learning experiences.
  - d. opportunities for increasing independence in use of materials and equipment.
  - e. structured and unstructured opportunities for children's active involvement with people and materials.
  - f. spontaneous learning and builds on children's repertoires and curiosity.
  - g. learning areas designed for individual and group exploration and growth.
  - h. the integration of routine daily activities into learning.
- 8.23 The educational program provides experiences that prepare students for a successful transition to elementary school settings.

***Indicators for schools with elementary school programs:***

- 8.24 The educational program places emphasis on the development of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills, plus the knowledge and competencies that establish the basis for greater understanding.
- 8.25 The educational program provides experiences that prepare students for successful transition to middle and secondary school settings.

***Indicators for schools with middle school programs:***

- 8.26 The educational program provides activities and experiences that assist early adolescents in identifying their aptitudes and interests, self-directed decision-making, and building self-worth.

- 8.27 The educational program provides experiences that prepare students for successful, smooth transitions from elementary school to middle school and from the middle school to secondary school.

***Indicators for schools with secondary school programs:***

- 8.28 The educational program facilitates a smooth transition from elementary or middle school to secondary school.
- 8.29 The educational program develops academic knowledge and skills as well as career competencies.
- 8.30 The educational program provides appropriate educational programs for students who are concluding formal study as well as those planning further education.
- 8.31 The educational program develops habits of the mind and attitudes required for success in further education and in the workplace.

***Indicators for schools that provide distance education:***

- 8.32 Student interaction (synchronous and asynchronous) with faculty and other students is facilitated through a variety of means as an essential characteristic of the educational program.
- 8.33 Students and their families (if appropriate) are informed about any aspects of the educational program that are created or delivered by an organization other than the school.
- 8.34 Stated student performance outcomes for programs delivered through distance education are achievable through that methodology.
- 8.35 Instructional materials are developed by authors qualified in distance education techniques. Textbooks and other instructional materials are suitable for distance learning.
- 8.36 Appropriate study skills necessary for students to utilize a distance education model effectively and efficiently are included as part of the educational program and instructional process.

## **STANDARD 9: ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING**

**The Standard:** The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

### ***Indicators for all schools:***

- 9.1 The leadership and staff commit to, participate in, and share in accountability for student learning.
- 9.2 Assessment of student learning and performance is aligned with curriculum and instruction in a coherent system consistent with the school's philosophy/mission.
- 9.3 Assessment results are analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor for:
  - a. individual students as they move through the school
  - b. cohorts of students as they move through the school
  - c. comparable (local, state, and national) groups outside of the school
- 9.4 Assessment results are used to make decisions regarding allocation of resources.
- 9.5 The assessment of student learning and performance enables students to monitor their own learning progress and teachers to adapt their instruction to students' specific learning needs.
- 9.6 Assessment methods and content address suitable social, emotional, physical, and cognitive/language goals for students.
- 9.7 Assessments take into account recent, reliable research findings on child development and growth.
- 9.8 Assessments reflect understanding of the unique needs and backgrounds of each student.
- 9.9 Records of students' learning and performance are maintained. General standards for transcript control and use, including those related to confidentiality, are known and observed.
- 9.10 Assessment results are the basis for making recommendations to families whose children may benefit from further evaluation. Referrals to specialists are made for early identification of possible disabilities and/or health conditions.
- 9.11 Members of the staff work collaboratively with colleagues and families to review data about learners' progress and to develop appropriate strategies for continued progress.
- 9.12 Families are viewed as an important source of information and insights about students.
- 9.13 The school communicates its assessment policies and practices to the total school community (e.g., via parent handbooks, web sites, teacher handbooks, policy manuals).
- 9.14 Communication with families regarding students' progress in learning and performance is regular, productive, and meaningful.
- 9.15 Students learn and perform at levels expected, or progress is being made to raise results accordingly.

***Indicator for schools with early age programs:***

- 9.16 Children are observed by teachers on a daily basis using a systematic and objective process for formal and informal observation and documentation.

***Indicators for schools that provide distance education:***

- 9.17 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure that students fulfill program requirements personally and without inappropriate assistance.
- 9.18 The school implements written policies and procedures to ensure the identity of the students when assessment of learning is conducted electronically or by means other than in a location in which the student is in the presence and under the direct supervision of a staff member.
- 9.19 Members of the staff who evaluate student assignments are qualified in the fields they are evaluating.
- 9.20 Data on lesson and course completion rates are used to evaluate and revise, as needed, instructional and educational services.

## **STANDARD 10: STUDENT SERVICES**

**The Standard:** The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.

### ***Indicators for all schools:***

#### **Student Support Services**

- 10.1 Student support services address academic skills development, social skills development, personal growth, and career planning.
- 10.2 Counselors, administrators, teachers, and/or other staff members share responsibility for providing guidance and support to students.
- 10.3 The school is sensitive to the critical importance of non-academic needs of students. A process is in place to address students' emotional and social needs.
- 10.4 Assessment data are used to adapt curriculum and teaching methods, provide personalized counseling, and identify appropriate program placement for students.
- 10.5 Career awareness activities are provided as appropriate.
- 10.6 Student support services extend into and incorporate community services as needed.
- 10.7 Student data are current, comprehensive, and readily available for use by the staff.
- 10.8 Follow-up studies of graduates and other former students are carried out and data are shared with staff to help determine the effectiveness of the school's educational program and services.
- 10.9 The school offers an orientation program for new students and their families to share the school's philosophy/mission, policies, procedures, and expectations.
- 10.10 Families are provided with information about child development, education, and related topics through personal communications, pamphlets, meetings, and referrals to web sites and other resources.

#### **Transportation Services**

- 10.11 Written policies and procedures are implemented to ensure the safety of students when being picked up, transported, and dropped off by transportation provided by the school.
- 10.12 Appropriate training is provided to transportation providers.
- 10.13 Transportation services provided or contracted by the school meet the safety requirements of all appropriate legal authorities.

#### **Food Services**

- 10.14 Student dining areas are functional and hygienic.
- 10.15 Meals provided by the school meet generally accepted nutritional standards. Information about nutritional values of the foods is available.
- 10.16 Appropriate training is provided to food services providers.

- 10.17 Food services personnel meet the health requirements of all appropriate authorities.
- 10.18 Food service facilities are inspected regularly and meet the health and safety requirements of all appropriate authorities.

### **Services for Students With Special Needs**

- 10.19 The school implements written policies and procedures to identify and address the needs of students with special needs.
- 10.20 The school provides or refers families to appropriate related services and/or accommodations to meet student needs.
- 10.21 As applicable, the school is in compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements related to students with special needs.

### **Admissions and Placement**

- 10.22 The school implements written admissions policies and procedures.
- 10.23 The school implements written policies and procedures for placement of students in appropriate programs and levels.
- 10.24 Applicants for enrollment and their families are clearly informed of the philosophy/mission of the school, the nature and extent of the educational program and services available, tuition and fees (if applicable), school policies, and expectations for satisfactory student performance.
- 10.25 The school accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success in the educational program as appropriate and interpreted by law.
- 10.26 All statements and representations relating to the school's educational programs, services, and resources are clear, accurate, and current.

### ***Indicators for schools that provide distance education:***

- 10.27 Prior to admission, prospective students and their parents/guardians are advised about the self-motivation and commitment needed for successful distance learning and the technical competence required to participate and learn in the educational program.
- 10.28 Admissions inquiries are handled in a prompt and thorough manner.
- 10.29 Adequate advisory services are available for students who are having difficulty with their studies as well as for those who are rapid learners.
- 10.30 Students are actively encouraged to start, continue, and finish the program in which they have enrolled.
- 10.31 The institution implements written policies and procedures to evaluate students' previous academic work and to provide fair and consistent credit for their previous studies or work experience.

## **STANDARD 11: STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

**The Standard:** The school provides access to non-discriminatory student activities that are age- and developmentally appropriate to supplement the educational program. A balance of academic, social, co- or extra-curricular, and service activities is maintained. Student activities are selected to foster intellectual, cultural, and social growth as well as physical health and wellness. Student activities provide opportunities for student leadership and social interaction and encourage development of student interests. These activities are adequately financed, periodically reviewed by stakeholders, managed by school governance and leadership, and appropriate to the school's philosophy/mission.

### ***Indicators for all schools:***

- 11.1 Students are offered opportunities to build their skills in handling responsibility, taking initiative, leadership competencies, cooperation, and self-direction.
- 11.2 Students, staff, families, and the community are encouraged to offer input about and participate in student activities.
- 11.3 Staff members, parents, and other volunteers who lead or participate in student activities are approved by the school's leadership, suitably qualified, and provide appropriate supervision to students.
- 11.4 The school recognizes student accomplishments, contributions, and responsibilities in meaningful ways.
- 11.5 Relationships among staff, volunteers, and students demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding.
- 11.6 The school holds events that include staff, families, and children.

### ***Indicators for boarding schools:***

- 11.7 The school assists students to develop healthy relationships with adults in loco parentis and with other students.
- 11.8 Provisions for student privacy, recreation, and religious practice are appropriate.
- 11.9 Continuous and responsible supervision by qualified adults is provided for all boarding students, including evenings, weekends, and periods when classes are not in session.

## **STANDARD 12: INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY**

**The Standard:** Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school's pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

### ***Indicators for all schools:***

#### **Information Resources**

- 12.1 Information resources are properly catalogued, housed, and periodically reviewed for relevancy and currency.
- 12.2 Media center staff is sufficient and appropriately qualified to provide effective services to students and staff.
- 12.3 Adequate orientation about the use of media services, learning resources, and equipment is provided to the staff and students.
- 12.4 Information resources are appropriately supported annually with funding from the school's budget.
- 12.5 Information resources are age- and developmentally appropriate, current, and reflect social and cultural diversity.
- 12.6 Staff and students are provided opportunities to offer input into the types, quality, and format of the information resources provided.

#### **Technology**

- 12.7 The technology resources staff is sufficient and appropriately qualified to provide effective service to students and staff.
- 12.8 Technology resources are appropriately maintained and supported annually with funding from the school's budget.
- 12.9 Adequate skills training on the use of technology resources and equipment is provided to the staff and students.
- 12.10 The school implements written policies and procedures for acceptable use of technology.
- 12.11 Long-range planning activities are in place to ensure that the school keeps pace with technological changes.

### ***Indicators for schools with early age programs:***

- 12.12 Various forms of technology, including computers, cameras, and audio recording equipment, are provided for supervised, active use by children.
- 12.13 Passive media (e.g., television, videos) are limited to appropriate content and used only as an infrequent, specific support for topics addressed in the curriculum.

***Indicators for schools that provide distance education:***

- 12.14 The technology system is adequate to deliver the educational program, available when needed, and reliable.
- 12.15 The school provides students with reasonable technical support for the educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required to implement the educational program.

## ACCREDITATION TERMS AND ACTIONS

At its October 2006 meeting, the Commission on Secondary Schools adopted changes to Commission Policy 1.3, Commission Actions on Accreditation that revised the accreditation actions the Commission can take. These revised actions will become effective with the implementation of the Standards for Accreditation—2007. The Commission on Secondary Schools will begin to use these actions for accreditation decisions beginning on January 1, 2009. Therefore, these actions will apply to all schools entering self-study beginning September 1, 2007 and that host a visiting team beginning on September 1, 2008 and thereafter.

The most significant change in the revision of accreditation actions is that schools must now be determined by the Commission to meet all 12 of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation to be “Accredited.” If one or more of the Standards is not met, a school will be granted “Probationary Accreditation.” This differs from the previous Commission actions in that, previously, a school could be determined to not meet one or several of the Standards for Accreditation and be granted “Accreditation with Stipulations.” “Accreditation with Stipulations” will now be granted only when a school meets all of the Standards for Accreditation but does not meet:

- Specific Indicators of Quality for a Standard, although it is determined that the overall Standard is met; and/or
- Specific requirements of the protocol used for self-study and evaluation.

The other significant changes is in the actions for accreditation for Candidate Secondary Schools where the action of “Accreditation Deferred” has been replaced with the actions “Accreditation Postponed” and “Accreditation Denied.”

The new terms, definitions, and actions are:

### **Accreditation Actions for Secondary Schools Previously Accredited:**

#### *Accreditation*

An “Accredited” institution is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. The institution agrees to adhere to the requirements for maintenance of accreditation, and there are no outstanding issues related to the Standards or requirements of the protocol that would require monitoring or on-site visits beyond the normal expected events required by the protocol utilized.

#### *Accredited with Stipulations*

An institution “Accredited with Stipulations” is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. However, the institution has been given significant stipulations in one or more areas that require follow-up and monitoring in order to ensure that the stipulations are met. In such cases, MSA will identify the stipulations and specify the nature, purpose, timelines, and scope of any corrective action required or additional information to be submitted

to the Commission by the institution. Subsequent reports and/or on-site visits may be required to provide the Commission with assurance that appropriate corrective action has been taken. Corrective action must take place within the specified time limit unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director.

### *Probationary Accreditation*

An institution granted Probationary Accreditation is a previously MSA accredited educational organization that does not meet one or more of the MSA Standards for Accreditation, does not adhere to applicable MSA policies, and/or does not follow the requirements of the self-study protocol used. The institution is provided with specific corrective actions that must be followed in order for the institution to have its accreditation in good standing reinstated with MSA. Subsequent reporting and/or onsite visits confirming those corrective actions are required within defined time limits in order for the entity to remove probation and gain accreditation for the full term as specified by the protocol used. Probationary Accreditation is typically granted for a period of one year, but shall not exceed a maximum of three years.

### *Removal of Accreditation*

The Commission may remove the accreditation of a previously accredited educational organization for one or more of the following reasons:

- Failure of the institution to correct the deficiencies that led to Accreditation with Stipulations, Limited Term Accreditation, or Probationary Accreditation
- Failure of the institution to continue to meet the MSA Standards for Accreditation
- Failure of the institution to adhere to timelines for self-study, accreditation maintenance, and planning expectations
- Failure of the institution to submit required MSA reports
- Failure of the institution to pay approved dues and fees
- Inability or unwillingness of the institution to adhere to Commission policies and/or procedures

When the Commission removes the accreditation of an institution, this action will be recorded in the Commission's permanent records for the institution.

## **Accreditation Actions for Candidate Secondary Schools:**

### *Accreditation*

An "Accredited" institution is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. The institution agrees to adhere to the requirements for maintenance of accreditation, and there are no outstanding issues related to the Standards or requirements of the protocol that would require monitoring or on-site visits beyond the normal expected events required by the protocol utilized.

### *Accreditation with Stipulations*

An institution “Accredited with Stipulations” is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. However, the institution has been given significant stipulations in one or more areas that require follow-up and monitoring in order to ensure that the stipulations are met. In such cases, MSA will identify the stipulations and specify the nature, purpose, timelines, and scope of any corrective action required or additional information to be submitted to the Commission by the institution. Subsequent reports and/or on-site visits may be required to provide the Commission with assurance that appropriate corrective action has been taken. Corrective action must take place within the specified time limit unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director.

#### *Limited Term Accreditation*

An institution with Limited Term Accreditation is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, but has conditions or issues to address and/or does not fulfill all expectations associated with the accreditation protocol used. In such cases, the Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of any further information to be submitted by the institution. The corrective action required is of an immediate nature and must be addressed by a specific deadline in order for the institution’s accreditation term to be extended to the full term of accreditation. Issues are such (in complexity and seriousness) that the Commission recommends a shortened accreditation term and additional monitoring activities are scheduled. A follow-up report and a special visit are required before the accreditation term can be extended. Should the accreditation of the institution be extended to the full term of accreditation, the period of time that the institution is accredited for the limited term shall be subtracted from the normal term of accreditation.

#### *Accreditation Postponed*

An institution with Accreditation Postponed is an educational organization, not currently accredited by MSA, for which an accreditation action is postponed because one or more of the Standards for Accreditation are not met, applicable MSA policies are not adhered to, and/or deficiencies in the self-study process were identified during the team visit. Specific corrective action will be required. An onsite visit may be required to verify that the specified corrective action has been taken. If evidence of progress in taking corrective action is not evident within one year, the institution will be presented to the Commission for a review of its continued Candidacy.

#### *Accreditation Denied*

An institution with Accreditation Denied is an educational organization, not currently accredited by MSA, for which accreditation is denied when there are significant violations of Standards for Accreditation, applicable MSA policies are not adhered to, and major shortcomings in the self-study process are identified during the team visit. Violations will be specifically identified by MSA. Membership will be terminated. The institution will be permitted to reapply for candidacy only when the deficiencies have been corrected and an onsite visit confirms that corrective action has been taken. The institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least one year and must initiate the candidacy process from the beginning.

## **Accreditation Actions for Postsecondary, Non-Degree Granting Career and Technology Schools:**

### *Accreditation*

An “Accredited” postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology school meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol for establishing eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA programs. The institution agrees to adhere to the requirements for maintenance of accreditation, and there are no outstanding issues related to the Standards or requirements of the protocol.

### *Accredited with Stipulations*

An institution “Accredited with Stipulations” is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. However, the institution has been given significant stipulations in one or more areas that require follow-up and monitoring in order to ensure that the stipulations are met. In such cases, MSA will identify the stipulations and specify the nature, purpose, timelines, and scope of any corrective action required or additional information to be submitted to the Commission by the institution. Subsequent reports and/or on-site visits may be required to provide the Commission with assurance that appropriate corrective action has been taken. Corrective action must take place within the specified time limit unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director.

The Commission may, at its discretion, require an institution to report on progress sooner than the maximum time allowed, and may, for good cause (e.g. demonstration of good faith efforts to remedy existing deficiencies and a reasonable expectation that deficiencies will be remedied within the period of extension), extend the time for demonstrating compliance.

However, if the institution is unable to provide a just cause as to why it cannot come into full compliance within the timelines listed in Policy 6.3.6., accreditation shall be removed.

### *Removal of Accreditation*

The Commission may remove the accreditation of a previously accredited postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology school for one or more of the following reasons:

- Failure of the institution to correct the deficiencies that led to Accreditation with Stipulations within the time period prescribed by the Commission
- Failure of the institution to continue to meet the MSA Standards for Accreditation
- Failure of the institution to adhere to timelines for self-study, accreditation maintenance, and planning expectations
- Failure of the institution to submit required MSA reports
- Failure of the institution to pay approved dues and fees
- Inability or unwillingness of the institution to adhere to Commission policies and/or procedures

When the Commission removes the accreditation of an institution, this action will be recorded in the Commission's permanent records for the institution.

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In addition, Commission Policy 1.3 includes the following provisions related to the accreditation of schools:

**Procedural Actions.** The procedural actions the Commission may take are:

*Monitoring and Non-Compliance Actions*

Monitoring actions require the institution to submit to closer scrutiny by the Commission including follow-up reports, special visits, shortened terms of accreditation, and probationary status. The four monitoring actions are as follows:

- Accreditation with Stipulations
- Limited Term Accreditation
- Probationary Accreditation
- Accreditation Postponed

*Show Cause Actions*

A show cause action requires an institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be removed. Show cause may or may not result in the adverse action or removal of accreditation. (See Policy 3.7.—Show Cause Action.)

*Adverse Actions*

An adverse action is an action by the Commission to deny accreditation or remove an institution from the list of accredited institutions.

- Accreditation Denied (for candidate institutions)
- Removal of Accreditation (for previously accredited institutions)

**Terms of Accreditation.** The Commission shall grant terms of accreditation based on the following criteria:

- The term prescribed by the protocol utilized for self-study and evaluation
- The recommendations of the evaluation team, the MSCSS staff, the appropriate advisory committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee

See 6.3.6.--Time Frames for Further Review and Action for Institutions Not in Compliance—for further details on Terms of Accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting, career and technology schools.

**Duration of Terms:** Terms of accreditation may be granted from one to ten years.

**Effective Date of Accreditation:** The institution's date of accreditation shall be effective on the first day of the month following the granting of accreditation by the Commission.

**Duration of Probationary Terms of Accreditation:** Because concerns are of an immediate nature, probationary accreditation will not exceed three years.

**Duration of Limited Accreditation Terms (for candidate institutions):** Because concerns are of an immediate nature, limited accreditation shall not exceed three years.

**Time Limit Following a Show Cause Action:** Institutions shall respond to show cause actions within no more than six months of receipt of the show cause action, and the Commission shall respond no more than six months from receipt of the institution's response to the show cause action.

**Status of Institution during Reaccreditation Activities:**

The accreditation status of an institution seeking reaccreditation shall not change following the visit of an evaluation team until the Commission takes an accreditation action and establishes a new term of accreditation for the institution. This shall be true so long as the Commission has reasonable cause to believe that Standards for Accreditation and expectations for accredited institutions are met.

**Status of Institution during Probationary Accreditation and Limited Term Accreditation:**

Institutions with Probationary Accreditation shall remain accredited by the Commission on Secondary Schools until a further accreditation action is taken by the Commission.

**Notification of Accreditation Decisions:**

The Commission on Secondary Schools makes every effort to notify institutions, in writing, of all accreditation actions as soon after Commission action as possible, but no later than 30 days after action is taken.

**Actions of Other Agencies:**

While the Commission acts independently of other organizations in taking accreditation actions, it shall not knowingly grant candidacy or accreditation to any institution that is on probation or has had its accreditation removed by another recognized accrediting agency or state agency, until such time that the Commission is assured and satisfied that the reasons for suspension, revocation, or probation have been corrected.