

WHAT IS

ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH

(AFG)?

An MSA Accreditation Protocol
for Elementary, Secondary, and
Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12
Organizations



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WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT?

The activity now known as accreditation is traceable to the guild orientation of the medieval academic communities. The word “accreditation” is derived from middle French, old Italian usage. The first meaning of its root term is “trustworthiness.” Since the early 1900s, accreditation has had a major impact on the field of American education. Accreditation responds to the public’s demands for improved quality and greater accountability for institutions serving society’s needs. Accreditation agencies enjoy a unique “public trust” role in the United States. Accredited schools can be trusted by the public to be what they claim they are and to do what they claim to do. Whatever an accredited school says about itself has both the sanction and the confidence of the profession.

Accreditation encourages and facilitates school improvement.....

- Involvement in an ongoing accreditation protocol fosters excellence and ongoing improvement in a school. The question is not if we want a better school, but how we will assure continuous school improvement. Accreditation provides a *systematic* process that requires a school to ask why it exists, to establish a vision of its future, and to determine specific objectives for reaching that vision.
- The *information* gathered through the accreditation protocol serves as a sound basis for school/district improvement, strategic planning, restructuring, and staff development.
- The accreditation process *examines the entire school*—its philosophy and goals, its community, its programs and services, the facilities and financial stability.
- Accreditation provides a way to *manage change* through regular assessment, planning, implementation, and reassessment.
- Accreditation helps schools/districts *establish priorities* for improvement by using thorough needs assessments, rather than faddish approaches to improvement.
- Accreditation requires a school to establish and *implement a 5-year improvement plan* based upon its vision of the future. Desired school-wide results are a part of the perpetual accreditation cycle that includes:
 - School self-assessment that identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement in the current educational program for students.
 - Insight and perspective from the evaluation team.
 - Regular assessment of progress during the intervening years between full self-studies.
- The accreditation process helps to ensure *greater continuity* of student experiences through continuous clarification of the school’s direction.
- Participation in accreditation provides an excellent *growth experience for staff* who participate on visiting teams to evaluate other schools.

- Because accreditation is a regional activity that encourages broader involvement with educators from other states and independent, public, and church-related constituencies, participants learn from the differences and benefit from the resulting *professional networks*.
- The *support of MSA staff* and encouragement of the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation motivates schools to maintain their focus on continuous school improvement.

Accreditation provides a means for public accountability.....

- The accreditation process validates to the public the *integrity of a school's program and student transcripts*.
- The accreditation process assures a school community that the school's *purposes are appropriate* and are being accomplished through a viable educational program.
- The accreditation process *justifies the faith and resources* others place in the school.

Accreditation fosters stakeholder involvement and commitment.....

- Accreditation provides opportunities for *grass roots, broad-based involvement* of stakeholders in charting the direction of the school.
- The accreditation process offers *a mechanism* for constituent groups to play a major role in determining the school's future, helping a school to be all it can be.
- Accreditation involves key people in *creating a vision* of the future, rather than letting the future happen to the school.

Accreditation builds positive public relations.....

- Accreditation provides opportunities to *emphasize the positive* and show how strong and effective the school is.
- Willingly submitting a school to public scrutiny and evaluation builds commitment and a deeper understanding of the school's efforts. It helps staff *to broaden its view of community expectations* and *fosters closer school and community collaboration*.
- The accreditation process provides *articulation and communication opportunities* between school levels and among stakeholder groups.

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH?

The *Accreditation for Growth* protocol differs from other accreditation formats historically used by accrediting agencies because *AFG* brings a new focus to the most important work of schools and school communities---increasing the performance of their students. Quite simply, the *AFG* protocol seeks to change the traditional school culture of primarily focusing on the inputs of school improvement (facilities, program, services, etc.) to focusing on the outputs desired in student performance.

Using strategic planning as a vehicle for school improvement and growth in student performance, the *Accreditation for Growth* process provides linkages among various planning and school improvement efforts. In *AFG*, the primary determinants of progress are not the resources a community provides for the schools (the inputs), but instead the actual results of the school's work-- the students' performance. *AFG* requires the school to establish objectives for improving student performance based on a vision of a preferred future for the school. Therefore, *AFG* is a future oriented and visionary process. In addition, the *AFG* protocol provides for a continuous review of programs and services and of the results of student performance. Finally, it allows diverse constituent groups to participate in charting the future of the school.

In this era of accountability, student performance is and should be the essential focus of educators. School leaders must keep the attention of the entire school community on the five questions below. In the *Accreditation for Growth* process, the following five questions will guide the school's inquiry.

QUESTION #1: What should students know, and how should they be able to use what they know? What content, process skills, and work habits should be the priorities?

QUESTION #2: How well should students perform and what does excellent performance look like?

QUESTION #3: How will we assess and evaluate student performance?

QUESTION #4: How well do students currently perform? What is the actual quality of their work?

QUESTION #5: What will we do to improve student performance?

In setting a course for continuous improvement in student performance, the school must study not only what the existing data tells about students' present performance, but the school must also set clear targets for what the school wants student performance to be. Maintaining a focus on the above five questions is essential to a successful continuous planning process and is a "habit of mind" that must be cultivated and nurtured by the Planning Team. Too often schools find themselves working on curriculum and instructional materials and engaging in staff development before they have clearly decided what students should know, how they should use

their content knowledge, process skills, and work habits, and what the quality of their performance should be.

The *Accreditation for Growth* protocol was written to be compatible with school improvement requirements of the various states and governing agencies. There is a great amount of flexibility inherent in *AFG* and thus, the protocol is compatible with any school improvement requirement that focuses primarily on increasing the level and quality of student performance. By using the *AFG* protocol, most schools will be able to fulfill school improvement planning requirements of their various governing agencies and to obtain accreditation through the same planning process.

ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH **PARAMETERS**

While *AFG* is flexible in its approaches, the following five areas are the *non-negotiables* of the *Accreditation for Growth* process. Evidence of these parameters must be in place in order for the school to be accredited using the *AFG* protocol.

A Focus on Student Performance and Growth

- End results in student performance are key
- School improvement efforts aimed at student learning, student performance, student results

A Culture of Accountability in Student Performance

- Measurable objectives
- Viable internal monitoring process; development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plans

A Planning Ethic

- Continuous clarification of the school's unique mission, beliefs, and expected student performance areas (objectives)
- Processes that are vision-driven
- Action-oriented: development of long-term strategic action plans that integrate program, services, facilities, and support to address growth needs

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

- Continuous evaluation
- An annual review process
- A dynamic process; flexibility to modify plans
- Commitment to peer review

Involvement of Representative Constituents

- Inclusiveness
- Involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the planning process
- School and community-wide ownership of planning process and content

COMPONENTS OF ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH

PROCESS	CONTENT	STANDARDS
Context of the School	District Strategic Plan**	Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs and/or Objectives
Planning Team	Beliefs	Governance and Leadership Organizational Design & Staff Educational Programs
Composition	Mission	Learning Media Services & Technology
Operation	Internal Scan**	Student Services Student Life & Student Activities
Feedback	External Scan**	Facilities Health & Safety
Roles of:	2-4 Measurable	Finances
Administration	Student Performance	Assessment of Student
Governing Body	Objectives with	Learning
Internal Coordinator	Technical Review	Planning
External Facilitator**		
Communication and Awareness Activities	Non- <i>AFG</i> Goals**	
Action Plan & Implementation Teams**	Action Plans	
Annual Reviews		

**These items are not “required” for accreditation purposes, but schools have found they contribute to a richer plan and greater chances for implementation success.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AFG

To what does a school commit when it selects the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol?

By choosing *AFG (Accreditation for Growth)* as its accreditation protocol, a school makes several commitments:

- It commits to focusing on the end result – improved student performance – as the primary priority for school improvement efforts.
- It commits to operating from a vision of where it wants and/or needs to go with the mission and beliefs serving as a unifying force for change.
- It commits to including a varied spectrum of stakeholders in the process of continually defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing action plans developed by these stakeholders.
- It commits to a process where progress will be continuously reviewed.
- It agrees to participate in a peer review and external validation process by accepting outside visitors.

What are the components of the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol?

There are three components to the *AFG* protocol—the planning process, the content of the plan, and adherence to the Middle States Association standards of accreditation. These components are presented in the school’s *AFG* plan developed by a planning team of representative stakeholders from the school and community.

A planning process should be in place that will ensure that the school has the capacity, the will, and the systems in place to implement its action plans. The planning process typically includes: an internal coordinator and planning team responsible for developing and monitoring a plan for improving student performance; procedures for communicating planning activities to the school community and obtaining their ongoing input into the plan; provision for annual reviews of the plan; and one or more teams responsible for implementing the plans. (See page 13 of this booklet.)

The *AFG* plan for improving student performance should be consistent with the vision of the school/district’s overall strategic plan. It should contain the following elements: mission, beliefs, two to four measurable student performance objectives approved by Middle States, and action plans that detail activities, timelines, individuals/groups responsible, resources provided to accomplish these objectives, and evaluation indicators. (See pages 14-23 of this booklet.)

Finally, the school must demonstrate that it continues to meet the MSA Standards for Accreditation. It is expected that representative stakeholders will be involved in the review of how well the school meets these standards.

How does *Accreditation for Growth* differ from traditional accreditation protocols?

There are five major areas where differences between *AFG* and traditional protocols can be identified.

FOCUS: In traditional accreditation processes, the school focuses its attention on a *retrospective* look at what it has been doing to improve such variables as educational programs, student services, library media, and facilities. As a part of the self-study process, the school conducts a comprehensive study of inputs into the educational process. For schools new to the Middle States process or those that want to look at themselves “inside-out”, the traditional process often remains the protocol of choice.

In the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol, the focus of the school’s attention is on a *prospective* look toward a desired future. In *AFG*, a strategic plan is developed that details desired results--what the school aims to improve in student performance areas and how these results will be accomplished. Two to four student performance objectives clearly outline those priority areas where resources and school improvement initiatives will be concentrated.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT: Another area of difference involves who is involved in the accreditation activities of the school. In the traditional approach, school staff and administration are the primary individuals involved in the self-study and evaluation process.

Accreditation for Growth, however, requires broader stakeholder involvement and includes the contributions of staff, administration, parents, board members, students, alumni, and often community representatives. This is considered to be essential since *AFG* is based on constructing a clear notion of the school’s mission and its underlying belief system. In *AFG*, a broader group of constituents is needed to chart a future direction for the school.

STRUCTURE: The traditional accreditation process involves all staff members and administration in a number of subcommittees that meet over the course of a year or so to analyze inputs--every subject area along with other areas such as student services, guidance, facilities, and finance. A Steering Committee comprised of staff and administration provides overall management to the process during the year of self-study and during the subsequent visiting team evaluation. Once the self-study and visit are completed, these groups typically disband.

In the *AFG* process, there is a single planning group comprised of representatives of each stakeholder group. This group initially develops the mission, beliefs, student performance objectives, and action plans for the school. While membership on the planning team may change over time, the group continues to meet throughout the accreditation cycle to provide oversight to the implementation of the strategic plan. Some schools, especially larger ones, also use separate implementation teams for each of their student performance objectives; this allows broader

participation and involvement in the planning and implementation processes. Implementation teams would, however, report to the overall planning team on a regular basis.

REVIEW: The traditional approach provides a ten-year accreditation cycle with an onsite visit by a team of 10-25 educators at the start of every ten-year timeline. Written periodic review reports are submitted at specified junctures when the school describes what action it has taken on each of the visiting team's recommendations.

Ongoing review is the hallmark of the *AFG* protocol and the school's planning team is required to conduct an annual review of the plan and the school's progress toward achieving its student performance objectives. Once every five to seven years, a Validation Team (of typically five individuals per school) makes an onsite visit to the school to examine the results of these annual reviews, the school's planning processes, and the content of the strategic plan. At the midpoint juncture in the five to seven-year cycle, one individual, appointed by MSA, makes a one-day onsite visit. Where possible, this individual will be a member of the Validation Team who reviewed the plans and processes 2-3 years earlier.

DRIVE: A final difference between the traditional and *AFG* protocols can be found in what drives the accreditation process. External standards developed by Middle States and its member institutions are the driving force of the traditional accreditation process. These standards include areas such as educational program, student services, library and media, facilities, finance, student activities, school leadership and governance, assessment of learning, and staff and administration.

While *AFG* still considers whether the school meets the MSA external standards, what drives the school improvement process is determined internally and is based on priorities the school and community identify as important. By beginning with the hopes and aspirations of the school community, commitment and ownership are created. In *AFG*, the Validation Team still looks at external standards, but in two different ways. First, each standard is analyzed separately to ensure that the school is maintaining its adherence to each. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the standards are examined in the context of the action plans and what will be needed to reach the student performance objectives the school has set. Thus, addressing the standards (inputs) is directly linked to desired outputs.

In summary, the traditional accreditation protocol emphasizes how well present programs are functioning and whether key input variables are in place. The *Accreditation for Growth* process emphasizes what is possible and desired for the future with the measure of success being the results produced by the school.

Why would a school select the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol?

Which approach, the traditional or *AFG*, a school decides to pursue is a local decision based on many factors. Has the school already conducted a traditional evaluation? Is the school or district already engaged in a strategic planning process? Are there ways to coordinate the accreditation activity with other state mandated or already existing school improvement initiatives?

Are all schools required to have an overall (district) strategic plan AND a site plan specific to the school?

The *Accreditation for Growth* process requires that a **school-wide** strategic plan be in place and that the school meets the MSA accreditation standards.

When a school is a part of a larger system where more than one school is a part of that system, the district often has a district-level plan in place. When such a plan exists, it is important for the school's strategic plan to be consistent with the district plan. If, however, no district plan exists, then a school may still be involved in the *Accreditation for Growth* process as long as the governing board representative, the superintendent/headmaster, and principal/head of school complete the *AFG* Commitment Form.

Stated another way, separate overall strategic and site plans are sometimes seen when the K-12 organization's and the school's improvement activities function in distinct and separate ways. If there are discrete planning and/or implementation teams or separate district and school objectives, then separate plans should be in evidence. Especially in public school districts, the district strategic plan is typically developed before the individual school establishes its site/*AFG* plan.

If on the other hand, one school exists with its own governing board, its own income, hires its own staff, and is totally autonomous, then a single strategic plan is developed and no separate site plan is necessary. The key to the decision about whether there should be one plan or two is determined by how the local school's improvement processes and plans function.

There are numerous variations to the above arrangements. If the planning team or the school has a question, they are encouraged to contact the Middle States office.

Why does Middle States think strategic planning is important to school improvement?

Artful and effective planning can engender school improvement in at least four meaningful and significant ways. First, effective planning involves the school and its stakeholders in an *inductive* process that allows varied issues, concerns, hopes, and aspirations to be raised. It can open up boundaries and create new vistas, offering a forum for new, never dreamed of ideas to surface.

Second, effective planning begins with the development of a vision for the future and follows with self-evaluation and data collection to determine how close the school is to achieving its vision. A vision-driven process fosters commitment and ownership, and ownership is a powerful force for school improvement.

Third, effective planning requires a school to focus on results first. In order to determine how to accomplish an objective, the school must first decide exactly what it wants to achieve. The result of a well-taught class is not that the instruction was completed appropriately, but that following

completion of instruction, learning occurred. Instruction is the means, learning is the result, and learning is reflected in student performance.

A fourth characteristic of effective planning is that it is continuous. Change is ubiquitous and likewise planning should be ongoing.

What happens if the school is unable to fully achieve its AFG objectives during the five to seven-year implementation period?

First and foremost, Middle States is looking for evidence of growth in student performance. It is critical that the school makes a good faith attempt to address fully the objectives and to implement the action plans upon which the school's accreditation is based. The setting of student performance objectives with reachable, yet lofty targets requires a delicate balance. MSA wants to see schools develop objectives that make them stretch to achieve them.

Besides looking for student performance growth, MSA is also expecting to see organizational growth. It is important for a school to provide evidence that, if it is not making the kind of progress it had intended on the student performance objectives, it conducts self-analysis to find out why and adjusts its plans accordingly. The "culture of planning" should cause an AFG school to continually develop new systems to ensure that the plans become a reality.

All of this is taken into consideration in accreditation decisions. Accreditation would be threatened if a school did not achieve its objectives, did not try to determine why, **and** essentially had not worked to implement its plans.

Can a new candidate school choose the AFG protocol?

A new candidate school can opt for *AFG*, although in most cases, MSA staff will suggest that a candidate school follow a protocol that engages the school in a comprehensive examination of all programs and services. The Candidacy Visitor who makes an onsite visit to a potential candidate school can also help new schools determine whether *AFG* is an appropriate approach to take. Generally, it is expected that schools entering the *AFG* process already meet Commission standards and wish to move their school improvement efforts to a different level. As a part of preparing for the Validation Team visit, the school describes how it meets Commission standards; the Validation Team provides assurances that standards are met.

Are there progress reports to be submitted to Middle States between Validation Team visits?

Because the focus of *AFG* is on continuous review, there are no interim periodic progress reports as is required in the traditional approach. However, schools are expected to have an annual review process in place; the Validation Team will examine this annual review process during its visit. At the midpoint juncture in the five to seven-year cycle, an individual appointed by MSA

will make a one-day onsite Mid-Point Review visit. Where possible, this individual will be a member of the Validation Team who reviewed the plans and processes 2-3 years earlier. Finally, when the next Validation Team visits the school after the five to seven-year interval of implementation, team members will want to see evidence that continuous review and annual updates have taken place.

Can *AFG* be used in a school that is rapidly changing, has frequent staff or administrative turnover, or has a transient student body?

Yes, all of these school situations might be ideal for using the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol. Because *AFG* helps to provide focus and direction, many schools find it is an appropriate process to ensure that the school “stays the course” even as it experiences rapid changes in staff, students, or administration.

Can *AFG* be used in a preK-12 organization?

A preK-12 organization can use the *AFG* protocol to accredit its schools. *Accreditation for Growth* has been officially recognized by both the Commission on Elementary Schools and the Commission on Secondary Schools as an appropriate accreditation option.

What are the typical costs of the *Accreditation for Growth* process?

The following costs are estimates for a single site elementary or high school using the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol. (**Schools engaged in a preK-12 process or multiple schools within a school district should consult with Commission staff for clarification of costs.)

Estimated costs:

Annual membership dues \$ 350.00 to \$1425.00

Evaluation preparation/Accreditation fee \$ 500.00

*Once every five to seven years; includes materials needed.

Previsit by the Team Chair \$ 300.00

*This visit seldom requires an overnight stay and usually covers just transportation costs. Occurs once every five to seven years, prior to the Validation Team visit.

Mid-Point Review \$ 300.00

*This visit takes place at the midpoint juncture of the five to seven-year accreditation cycle. This visit seldom requires an overnight stay and usually covers just transportation costs.

Validation Team Visit costs \$3000.00

*Will vary based on local costs of hotel, meals, transportation of team members to the school, and specific desired characteristics of team members (e.g. urban experience, boarding school). This estimate is based on a team of five members; validation team visits occur once every five to seven years.

Secretarial costs \$250.00

*Sometimes, the team chair will require secretarial services to compile the Validation Team report. This figure is the maximum allowable.

Estimated Maximum Cost

During the year of the Team Visit \$4575.00
(includes annual dues)

During the year of the Mid-Point Review \$1000.00

In other years \$ 350.00 to \$1425.00

In addition to these costs, the school may incur the normal internal costs of developing and maintaining district and site-based strategic plans. Some schools hire an external facilitator to assist in the planning process; others utilize district staff to facilitate. Schools might conduct teacher/student/ parent/community surveys as a part of their internal scanning process. There will also be costs associated with copying and binding the planning document for Validation Team members and others.

Frequently, the costs listed in the chart above will be lower, but schools should be prepared to pay these amounts and, therefore, should budget accordingly.

PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH PLAN

Planning Process

- Planning Team (PT)
 - Composition
 - Operation
 - Feedback
- Roles of:
 - Governing Body
 - Administration
 - Internal Coordinator (s)
- Communication and Awareness Activities
- Action Plan Implementation Teams
- Annual Review

CONTENT OF THE ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH PLAN

- **Mission**
- **Beliefs**
- **Objectives**
- **Action Plans**

Examples of mission statements:

The mission of the Central School is to produce graduates with unlimited capacity to compete in a superior manner in any challenge they undertake by guaranteeing each individual customized, all-inclusive learning experiences, integrating the unique agricultural, medical, and historical resources of our diverse community.

The mission of the Dayton Public Schools, as the transforming agent of the community, is to guarantee 100% success through a network of independent competing instructional services that actualize the unique potential of each person.

A school's/district's mission should be outcome-based, providing clarity on:

- the school's/district's *audience* (whom it currently serves or should serve in the future),
- its *action* (what it currently does or should do in the future),
- its *aim* (the current purpose for which it exists or what the school's/district's purpose should be in the future) and
- its *identity* (what makes the school/district unique)
- its *means/function* (how, in broad terms, it will do it).

Examples of belief statements:

We believe that:

- *Children are our community's most valuable asset.*
- *Understanding and appreciation of diversity are critical to world peace and harmony.*
- *Risk-taking and a willingness to change are necessary for continuous improvement.*
- *The transmission and creation of social and cultural values is the primary responsibility of education.*
- *Excellence is achievable and always worth the investment.*
- *Shared values and common goals shape and change the culture of healthy organizations.*

A Key Component of the Plan: Measurable Objectives

Example #1: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, 85% of students in grades K-12 will demonstrate competence with technology as measured by meeting grade level standards on the K-12 School Technology Performance Assessment.

Baseline: Year: 1999
22% of grade 2 students meet grade level technology standards
34% of grade 5 students meet grade level technology standards
41% of grade 7 students meet grade level technology standards
56% of grade 9 students meet grade level technology standards
66% of grade 10 students meet grade level technology standards
68% of grade 12 students meet grade level technology standards

Example #2: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, students will demonstrate an increase in responsibility to the K-12 School community as measured by the following:

- a.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating accomplished use of conflict resolution at the Lower School identified by 4th grade scores on the Lower School Conflict Resolution Rubric.
- b.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating accomplished service within the community at the Middle School identified by 8th grade scores on the Middle School Service Rubric.
- c.) a 20% increase in the number of seniors demonstrating accomplished leadership identified by the Leadership Rubric.
- d.) a 10% increase in the number of students demonstrating integrity and respect toward others in personal interactions identified by the K-12 School Personal Interactions Rubric.

Baseline: Spring 1999

- a.) 48% of 4th graders are “Accomplished” according to the Lower School Conflict Resolution Rubric
- b.) 34% of 8th graders are “Accomplished” according to the Service Rubric
- c.) 21% of seniors are “Accomplished” according to the Leadership Rubric
- d.) 56% of Lower School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric
- e.) 64% of Middle School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric
- f.) 84% of Upper School students are “Accomplished” according to the Personal Interactions Rubric

Example #3: (Measured by Internally Designed Assessment Tools)

By June 2005, Utopia Academy students will demonstrate increased understanding of diversity and tolerance towards others as measured by:

- a.) a 20% reduction in related discipline referrals
- b.) a 20% improvement in average scores on the Peer Evaluation Instrument
- c.) a 20% improvement in student perceptions on Utopia High School's Tolerance, Equity, and Diversity Survey.

Baseline:	Year: 1999	
	Related Discipline Referrals	<u>174 referrals</u>
	Peer Evaluation Instrument	<u>3.15 on a 5 point scale</u>
	Diversity Survey Results	<u>2.87 on a 5 point scale</u>

Example #4: (Measured by A Combination of Assessment Tools)

By the year 2005, 100% of students will demonstrate the core ethical values of caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, trust, respect, and citizenship as measured by adherence to the ABC High School Code of Conduct.

ABCCHS Code of Conduct

1. An ABCCHS student treats others with compassion and caring.

measured by:

- a.) a 25% increase in the number of altruistic and charitable activities conducted
- b.) a 40% increase in student participation in group and individual humanitarian projects such as food drives, collecting charitable donations, etc.
- c.) a 40% increase in students willingly helping classmates in need of assistance

Baseline:	Year: 1998-1999	
<u>12</u>	altruistic activities/charitable projects were conducted	
<u>62</u>	students participated in these activities	
<u>33</u>	students participated in assisting classmates in the Academic Support program or helped physically challenged or injured students	

2. An ABCCHS student displays honesty and trustworthiness in all academic endeavors.

measured by:

- a.) a 30% decrease in the amount of copying of homework and assignments
- b.) a 20% improvement on survey of students' perception of cheating
- c.) a 20% improvement on survey of teachers' noticing plagiarism in student papers submitted for grading

Baseline: Year: 1998-1999
52 students copied homework or assignment(s), as indicated on student character self inventory
81 students cheated on test, as indicated on student character self inventory
39 students plagiarized material as indicated by teacher survey

3. An ABCHS student is fair to all members of the AAHS community.

measured by:

- a.) a 20% improvement in student cooperation on collaborative projects indicated on Teacher Perception Survey and Student Self-Evaluation of Project
- b.) a 25% increase in participation in multicultural activities both in and out of the classroom.

Baseline: Year: 1998-1999
2.3 on a scale to 5 on survey of teachers' perception of students' level of cooperation on collaborative projects
3.5 on a scale to 5 on Student Self-Evaluation of Project
154 students participated in the Multicultural Fair and/or Saturnalia

4. An ABCHS student fulfills all classroom responsibilities.

measured by:

- a.) a 40% decrease in instances of late and/or incomplete homework.
- b.) a 2% increase in daily attendance rate
- c.) a 10% decrease in tardiness to school and class
- d.) a 20% increase in number of students receiving work habit grades of 4 and 5

Baseline: Year: 1998-1999
99 incidences of late and/or incomplete homework were reported by teachers
94% daily attendance rate
188 student-days tardy to school were reported
156 students were reported late to class by faculty
112 students received work habit grades of 4 or 5 on their report cards

5. An ABCHS student demonstrates respect for him/herself and others.

measured by:

- a.) a 10% decrease in the number of students rejected from membership in the National Honor Society due to not attaining character standards
- b.) a 40% increase in the number of student led discussions/ activities during the Mentoring periods
- c.) a 15% increase in the number of students scoring 5 on a character survey of students as rated by students and teachers
- d.) a 30% decrease in instances of inappropriate language in school

Baseline: Year: 1998-1999
23 students were denied entry to National Honor Society based on teacher
24 assessment of student character
13 Mentoring period discussions/activities led by students
54 Students were rated 5 on the student/faculty character
112 approximate number of instances of students being reprimanded for inappropriate language as rated in a teacher survey

6. An ABCHS student is a productive citizen of the school and community.

measured by:

- a.) a 10% increase in participation in a school or community volunteer program and/or the service component of the National Honor Society
- b.) 15% improvement in the cleanliness of the cafeteria, bathrooms, locker cubbies, and other areas of the school as reported by the custodians
- c.) a 10% increase in student participation in the Service Learning component for juniors
- d.) 15% increase in number of hours of service achieved by students applying for admission into the National Honor Society

Baseline: Year: 1998-1999
44 students participated in the Volunteer Corp
1.5 hours time spent each day by custodians picking up after students leave the building
32 students participated in the Service Learning component for juniors
3.2 hours number of hours students participated in NHS service projects per month

Example #5: (Measured by Externally-developed Assessment Tools)

By the year 2007, Utopia High School students will demonstrate improved academic achievement as measured by:

- a.) the percentage of students passing the state competency exam will increase by 10 percentage points.

Baseline: Year 2001 60% pass the state exam

- b.) the percentage of students achieving a score of 1000 or better on the SAT exam will increase by 10 percentage points.

Baseline: Fall 2001 81% score 1000 or better on SAT I

- c.) the number of students taking the SAT I exam will increase by 10%.

Baseline: Fall 2001 50% of students (320/640 students) took the SAT I

- d.) the percentage of students achieving a score of 3 or higher on Advanced Placement exams will increase by 10%.

Baseline: Year 2001 62% of students score 3 or higher on Advanced Placement exams

- e.) the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement exams will increase by 10%.
 Baseline: Year 2001 25% of students took AP exams
- f.) a 10 percentage point increase in the number of students who receive the Academic Excellence award
 Baseline: Year: 2000-2001 6% = number of students receiving Academic Excellence Award

Example #6: (Measured by Internally-developed Assessment Tools)

By June of the year 2007, 20% of Hill graduates will have demonstrated accomplished leadership skills as measured by The Hill School Leadership Matrix (HSLM).

- Baseline: Year: 2001 5.5% demonstrated accomplished leadership skills on the HSLM

Example #7: (Measured by a Combination of Internal and External Assessment Tools)

By the year 2007, grade 12 students at High Success School will demonstrate career planning skills as measured by:

- a.) a 5% increase in the percentage of students who matriculate to a 2-year or 4-year college
- b.) a 5% increase in the percentage of students who are placed in technical schools or the armed forces,
- c.) a 10% increase in the percentage of students who participate in the High Success Work-Study Program
- d.) a 10% increase in the percentage of students who successfully complete the Resume Writing section of the Business Education course.
- e.) 80% of students successfully compile a comprehensive career plan according to High Success School's Career Plan Criteria

- Baseline: Year: 2000-2001
- a.) 63% of students matriculated to college
 - b.) 23% of student placed in tech schools or the armed forces
 - c.) 43% of students participated in the Work-Study Program
 - d.) 15% of students successfully completed the Resume Writing section of the Business Education course
 - e.) 0% of seniors compiled an acceptable career plan**

Please note that Middle States will not accept baseline data of 0% as a **single measure of an objective, but will consider it when combined with other measurement tools. In the example above, although students have not yet been asked to compile career plans and thus score 0%, the other four measurement tools demonstrate the level of career planning skills students currently possess. A 0% baseline for the only measure of an objective would be an inaccurate representation of the skill level of students suggesting they have *no career planning skills* when in fact, there is *no baseline information*.

The Twelve Criteria for AFG Objectives

Level 1 Review: Objectives criteria analyzed by a technical review conducted by MSA staff.....

- Is this objective stated as a desired end result in student performance?
- Is this objective currently measurable?
- Are multiple forms of assessment used to measure growth on this objective?
- Is the objective measured by an external assessment?
- Does this objective reflect expected growth in student performance, over time?
- Is the baseline year noted as well as the year when the objective will be realized?

The second level of objectives review is conducted by the Validation Team during the team visit. The results of their analysis will be contained in the final written team report. The Validation Team will answer the following questions.

Level 2 Review: Objectives criteria analyzed by the Validation Team.....

- How closely are the objectives associated with exit outcomes of the school, graduation requirements or performance expectations for a school?
- How do the objectives reflect the school's mission?
- How do the objectives support the school/district/system strategic plan?
- Are the objectives reasonable and achievable?
- Does the school and/or district have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?
- Does the school and/or district have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objectives? Is baseline data currently available, logically organized, and presented in an easily understood format?

ACTION PLAN CRITERIA

Comprehensiveness and Logic of the Action Plan Steps/Strategies

- Do the steps/strategies in the action plan make sense? Are they in a logical order?
- Are there enough steps/strategies in the action plan to ensure that the objective will be achieved?
- Have any major steps been left out? Are there any key areas that need to be added to ensure that the objective is achieved?
- Do the action plan steps address many aspects of the school operations and the school population, rather than being narrowly focused on a particular organizational issue or a particular group of students?

Relationship to the Middle States Accreditation Standards and Self-Study Findings

- Have areas identified as needing improvement in the Middle States Standards review and throughout the self-study been effectively addressed in the action plan?

Systems to Ensure the Action Plan Is Implemented

- Have resources been thoroughly addressed?
- Have persons/groups responsible for implementation been thoroughly addressed? Are the groups/individuals varied so that the burden for implementation does not fall on just one or two individuals?
- Have clear indicators of success been identified for each action step so the school knows what action steps have been implemented and with what result?
- Have timelines been thoroughly addressed?
- Are the action steps sufficiently detailed to provide a road map for the school?
- Does the action plan clearly outline what will be done for the next 2-3 years? Is there a broad outline of what may be done in years 3 through 5 of the plan?
- Is the action plan reasonable and achievable?

NOTE: The above criteria apply to each action plan.

ACTION PLAN FORMAT

Objective:

Activity:	Responsibility of:	Timeline:	Resources Needed:	Indicators of Success:	Date Completed:
START EACH ACTIVITY WITH AN ACTION VERB	USE NAMES OF POSITIONS AND GROUPS, RATHER THAN PEOPLE	PUT START AND END DATES; YEAR 1 & 2 WILL BE SPECIFIC, YEARS 3, 4, 5 WILL BE GLOBAL	INCLUDE MONEY, PEOPLE. TIME, MATERIALS	INCLUDE INFORMAL, LESS QUANTITATIVE MEASURES, CHECK-POINTS AND ONGOING EVALUATIONS	FOR EACH ACTIVITY

ACTION PLAN FORMAT

Objective: By the year 2005, all students at East Middle School will demonstrate improved reading, writing, and language usage skills as evidenced by the following measures:

- a.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in reading
- b.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in writing
- c.) 12.2% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP mathematics communication outcome.
- d.) 16% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP science skills and processes outcome.
- e.) 29% of eighth graders will score in the top quartile on the MSPAP social studies skills and processes outcome.
- f.) 70% of eighth graders will reach satisfactory or excellent level on MSPAP in language usage.
- g.) a 10 percentage point improvement in median scores of sixth graders on the CTBS in all three of the following areas: reading, language and language usage
- h.) 90% of sixth graders will pass the MFRT
- i.) 95% of seventh graders will pass the MFRT
- j.) 99% of eighth graders will pass the MFRT
- k.) 80% of seventh graders will pass the MFWT
- l.) 96% of eighth graders will pass the MFWT

Activity:	Responsibility of:	Timeline:	Resources Needed:	Indicators of Success:	Date Completed:
Provide staff development workshop for all teachers on developing scoring rubrics to assess essays.	Instructional facilitators	By 10/00	\$500 for consultant fee and travel expenses	Evaluation of session by participants Teachers develop and use scoring	

				rubrics.	
Increase library collection in the areas of: --African American authors --art history --science fiction	Librarian	At least 10 books annually; ongoing activity	\$500 per year	Library circulation of new books	
Gather input from the faculty on ways to integrate reading, writing, and language skill development into the art curriculum.	Art teachers lead effort; all faculty invited to offer input.	By April 2000 (in time for K-12 Art Curriculum Development Committee's June meetings	none	List of ideas given to art teachers for possible inclusion in new curriculum. Art teachers describe how the staff input was incorporated into the new curriculum.	

etc.

etc.

FLOWCHART OF EVENTS IN THE ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH PROCESS

The following flowchart of events in the *Accreditation for Growth* process is designed for illustration purposes only. Schools may move through the events in a different order depending on their stage of development. The times recommended provide a guide for the school to follow in its decision-making process.

Eighteen Months to Two Years Before Reaccreditation/Team Visit Date

- School officials attend spring regional seminar on accreditation options, an *Accreditation for Growth* awareness session, and/or Middle States staff conducts an orientation at the school site.
- Board discusses accreditation options. School discusses options.
- Accreditation options presented to the faculty.
- School/Governing Body/District or System Head signs Commitment Form indicating that *AFG* has been selected.
- Middle States sends a formal letter of acceptance into the *Accreditation for Growth* process.

Six Months to Eighteen Months Before the Reaccreditation/Team Visit Date

- School determines whether an External Facilitator will be used. An Internal Coordinator(s) is appointed.
- Planning Team is established and begins meeting. Planning process issues from Section A are discussed to answer the questions “How will we make decisions? How will we operate?” and to establish clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- School sends a list of staff members to Middle States to participate in *Accreditation for Growth* team visits to other schools. This can be done via the nomination forms sent to the school by MSA.
- Planning Team develops/reconfirms mission statement and belief statements (Section B) to clarify the school’s purpose and answer the question “Who are we and what are we striving to become?”
- Planning Team develops student and community profiles (Section A-School Context) to answer the questions “Who are our students?” “What are the issues related to our students’ growth?”
- School staff and other appropriate stakeholders conduct standards review (Section C) to determine “What are we doing well and what needs to be improved? What impact do these standards have on student growth?”
- The Planning Team develops measurable student performance objectives to answer the question “What are our desired, expected results in student performance?”
- Objectives are submitted to Middle States staff for technical review. This technical review will likely occur more than once. The team visit will generally not be scheduled until the objectives have been reviewed.
- The Planning Team or Action Teams begin work on action plans for achieving the student performance objectives.
- The Planning Team ensures school-wide consensus on the mission, beliefs, objectives, and action plans.

Two to Six Months Before Reaccreditation Date/Team Visit

- School and Middle States staff establish a date for the Validation Team visit.
- The Planning Team or Action Teams finalize work on action plans for achieving the student performance objectives.
- The Planning Team establishes an ongoing follow-up process to monitor implementation and accomplishment of the action plans through the five to seven-year accreditation period. This includes an annual review process.
- Team chair appointed. School approves chair.
- Team members appointed.

Six Weeks to One Month Before Team Visit

- Final team roster sent to school. School has the right to reject any member of the team.
- School sends draft *AFG* planning document to chairperson prior to previsit.
- Previsit to school by the chairperson of the Validation Team.
- School sends final planning document to all team members **and** the Middle States *Accreditation for Growth* liaison.

Two to Three Months After the Team Visit

- Team Chair sends a draft copy of the team report to the school to correct for “errors of fact.” School returns draft to the Chair within ten days. This draft is not for distribution to the public.
- Chair corrects errors of fact and sends draft to Middle States office with an electronic version of the document.
- Middle States staff reviews the team report and sends two copies of the final report to the school. Staff analyzes the report and recommends accreditation action.
- School returns fax response to MSA indicating receipt of the team report.

Four to Six Months After the Team Visit

- The *Accreditation for Growth* Advisory Committee reviews the team report and recommends accreditation action to the Commissions.
- Schools visited in the fall are acted upon during spring Commission meetings (usually in April). Schools visited in the spring are acted upon during fall Commission meetings (usually in October).
- Official notification of Commission actions are generally mailed by mid- May and mid-November.
- Planning Team studies team report and determines what actions to take.
- Team report is distributed to a wide audience of stakeholders in the school community.

Seven Months to One Year After the Team Visit

- School conducts its annual review of the plan.

Two Years After the Team Visit

- School conducts its annual review of the plan.

Two and One-Half to Three Years After the Team Visit

- Middle States contacts the school regarding the appointment of a Mid-Point Reviewer.
- A mid-point review visit to the school is conducted by someone from the original Validation Team.
- School conducts its annual review of the plan.

Four Years After the Team Visit

- School conducts its annual review of the plan.

Five Years After the Team Visit

- School conducts its annual review of the plan

Six Years After the Team Visit

- School representatives attend an *AFG* Reaccreditation Workshop and begin renewal of plan.
- School conducts a self-assessment of current Standards for Accreditation.

BENEFITS OF DISTRICT-WIDE ACCREDITATION

PreK-12 accreditation results in.....

- *....improved vertical and horizontal articulation and communication.* Because activities are structured across the district, internal communication is improved. District-wide accreditation activities focus on a smooth transition from elementary to middle/junior high to high school levels and the continuity of student experiences from early childhood through secondary levels.
- *....improved student performance and organizational growth in the areas identified as district priorities.* Districts engaged in institution-wide accreditation activities are *required* to focus objectives on improved student performance and organizational growth. Concentrating on student performance objectives across the entire district ensures a consistent and concerted improvement effort on behalf of students served.
- *....the ability to align the accreditation process with district-wide strategic planning and school improvement efforts.* Most strategic activities are district-wide. Institution-wide accreditation, therefore, can enable schools and districts to combine strategic planning, school improvement, and accreditation into a single focused activity.
- *....the ability to align the accreditation process with state-mandated strategic planning and school improvement processes.* Increasingly, state education departments are requiring public schools to develop school improvement/strategic plans. Often these plans must be submitted on a district-wide basis. Because of the flexibility inherent in the Middle States accreditation protocols, state-mandated planning models can generally be used to meet certain accreditation requirements.
- *....significantly improved communications and awareness activities regarding the school improvement process.* A critical aspect of any school improvement process is informing the school community of plans for the future and celebrations of success. An institution-wide focus on these types of public relations activities ensures that the district speaks with “one voice” and presents a coherent and equitable view of the total school experience. When communications activities are orchestrated at a district-wide level, there is often a staff member available who has the knowledge and experience necessary to make the most of public relations efforts.
- *....greater understanding of and support for school improvement activities by the Board of Education* because the accreditation effort applies to all students in the entire district.
- *....more cost effective school improvement efforts* because priorities are clearly identified, schools are working together on shared initiatives, and the size of the evaluation team will be smaller.

- *....more effective alignment of budgeting procedures with school improvement initiatives.* In institution-wide efforts, the school improvement plan becomes more of a driving force for change than if only a segment of the school is involved. Thus, the plan can be more effectively budgeted for.
- *....a more thorough evaluation of improvement activities by the Middle States visiting team.* Because the entire district is involved in the accreditation process, the Visiting Team can conduct an evaluation of both district-level and site-specific planning processes. Thus, the accreditation process should be more valuable to everyone involved.

Summary Chart Comparing Middle States Association Accreditation Protocols

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Focus	Focus on: --the output of growth in measurable student performance areas -- the degree of compliance with MSA standards	Focus on: --learning area indicators --MSA standards for accreditation --content area standards --measurable student performance and organizational growth objectives	Focus on: --MSA standards for accreditation --individual curriculum areas --improvement plans
Stakeholder Involvement	--Broad stakeholder involvement including staff, administration, students, parents, Board, community members, etc.	--Broad stakeholder involvement including staff, administration, students, parents, Board, community members, etc.	--Primarily staff-driven with some involvement of the governance --Other stakeholders such as parents and students may be included
Structure of Self-Study and Planning Process	--Planning Team --Action Plan Teams (optional) --Implementation Teams (optional)	--Data Gathering Steering Committee --Planning Team --Action Plan Implementation Teams	--Steering Committee --Subcommittees for each MSA standard --Subcommittees for each curriculum area --Subcommittee to develop improvement plans
What the School Develops	School produces a narrative-style planning document with a summary of survey results for MSA accreditation standards	School produces a narrative-style planning document plus surveys for MSA accreditation standards, curriculum and instruction indicators, and content area standards for state or national curricula	School produces an in-depth school and community profile, a comprehensive self-study of twelve MSA accreditation standards, a comprehensive review of curriculum areas, and improvement plans

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Components of the Protocol	--Planning Process --Content of Plan (mission, beliefs, objectives, and action plans) --Middle States Accreditation Standards	Data Gathering Phase --Twelve Middle States Accreditation Standards reviews --Assessment of Curriculum and Instruction Indicators --Assessment of Content Standards --External Scan Planning Phase --Mission, beliefs, student performance and organizational growth objectives, and action plans --Planning Process	--School and Community Profile --Twelve Middle States Accreditation Standards reviews --Reviews of curriculum areas (at least nine areas) --Improvement plans
Objectives	Requires 2-4 measurable student performance objectives per school site	Requires 3-5 measurable student performance and/or organizational growth objectives per each school site, at least two of which must focus on student performance	Requires 3-5 measurable student performance and/or organizational growth objectives per each school site, at least two of which must focus on student performance
Measurability	Student performance objectives must be measurable by multiple assessment tools	Both student performance and organizational growth goals <u>must</u> be measurable by multiple assessment tools	Both student performance and organizational growth goals <u>should</u> be measurable by multiple assessment tools
Technical Review	Technical review of objectives and MSA approval required prior to team visit	Technical review of objectives and MSA approval required prior to team visit	No MSA approval required prior to team visit; Visiting Team reviews objectives on site
Validation/ Visiting Team Structure (typical)	Five member team for three and one-half day visit	Team of about 10 members for three and one-half days in the full team visit; 3 member team for three days if school requests extension of term	Team of 10-15 members for three and one-half days in the full team visit; 1-2 member team for a single day mid-point visit after five years

	Accreditation for Growth	Pathways to School Improvement	Reflections on Standards of Quality
Term of Accreditation	(Up to) Seven year accreditation term <i>(an institution can choose five or six year terms)</i>	Five year accreditation term, renewable for an additional five years	Five year accreditation term, renewable for an additional five years
Review: Accreditation Maintenance Requirements	Written progress reports not required; onsite, one-day, mid-point review at 2 ½ years; school conducts its own annual reviews	Written progress reports not required; an onsite, one-day, mid-point review at 2 ½ years; school is expected to conduct its own annual reviews	A major written progress report and update of improvement plans is required after five years; an onsite mid-point review at five years