

THE STANDARD

From the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools

Spring 2015

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My Advice to the Class of 2015!

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



Trying to find a message relevant to the graduates of 2015 is a challenge.

Study hard, because success in life is based on what you know might be an appropriate theme, though not necessarily true.

Choose your friends wisely because success is based on who you know is more pragmatic, but far less inspirational.

The truth is, what really counts is who you are and the kind of person you choose to become.

That message is backed up by considerable anecdotal evidence from my own experience and a growing body of research. Psychologist Dr. Daniel Goleman, for example, tells us that our emotional intelligence may be more important in determining our success than our IQ.

Kristen van Ogtrop, writer for TIME Magazine, suggests something similar by acknowledging that much of what students really need to learn won't get them in to college, but will make them better people. Instead of "racing to the top" van Ogtrop recommends aiming for the top and getting there "without knocking everyone else out of the way".

Who we become is more about learning to get along, working hard, making sacrifices and figuring out for ourselves who we want to be and the role we want to play in the world. Things not taught in the Common Core or on any list of 21st century skills.

I made it through this week without applying my math skills, my understanding of science, or my familiarity with classic literature or the course of history. What really got me through was my ability to manage my emotions, recognize and respect the feelings of others, and persist in doing what needed to be done before doing what I actually wanted to do.

Success for the class of 2015 may not be determined any differently than it has been in the past. While what you know and who you know will always matter some, your quality of life will be measured by hard work, integrity and the respect you have for and earn from others.

Good luck class of 2015! ||

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Pennsylvania High School First to be Awarded Program of Distinction in Visual Arts

Fox Chapel Area High School in Pittsburgh, PA, was recently awarded the Middle States Program of Distinction in Visual Arts and is the first school to have achieved this recognition. This also makes Fox Chapel Area High School (FCAHS) only the second MSA member to have achieved this recognition for three of its exemplary programs. Awards in School Counseling and Music were previously conferred in 2012.

Dr. Jane Pruitt, MSA Accreditation Officer, lifelong artist, and author of the Visual Arts Program of Distinction, visited the school in the fall of 2014 to observe its program, interact with stakeholders, and make a recommendation to the Middle States Commissions. Dr. Pruitt wrote in her report: "FCAHS and the community it serves have reason to be proud of the Visual Arts Department. The Visual Arts Program is of exemplary quality. The student work is of excellent quality. There is confidence in the community that the school district shares the opinion that teaching and learning in visual arts is essential to the cultural fabric of society."

The district and school-level administration have been supportive of the program and have provided resources to the arts, an area where other districts have cut back. The FCAHS Visual Arts Department has six full-time faculty which allows for the teaching of a wide array of courses. Each of the faculty is an artist with unique expertise so all courses can be taught in depth throughout multiple levels.

When asked to describe one of the most impressive aspects of their program, FCAHS Assistant Principal Dr. Rebecca Cunningham shared: "The teachers embrace all of the students – it doesn't

matter their level of readiness, talent, or ability, everyone is encouraged and grows." One of the high points of the process for the members of the Art Department was receiving the feedback from graduates and parents that their program truly did foster a lasting involvement with art, long after graduation.

Dr. Cunningham shared: "The Program of Distinction was a wonderful way to highlight the outstanding student work, teacher expertise, and rigorous curriculum at Fox Chapel Area High School. We really appreciated the opportunity to reflect upon the program and to think through how to continue to grow and improve." Although the process involved time, effort, and energy, high school Art Department Chair, Ms. Christine Smith felt that the FCAHS found true value in not only the outcome and award, but the process. Although the visit only occurred a few months ago they have already followed through on their identified next steps for the program – to offer AP Art History and to expand AP Portfolio to Photography and 3D.

Following the visit, Ms. Smith shared with MSA: "We felt like all of our time, effort, and energy were rewarded and validated because Dr. Pruitt took the process so seriously and gave us feedback on how to move forward. When we received the award it was extremely meaningful."

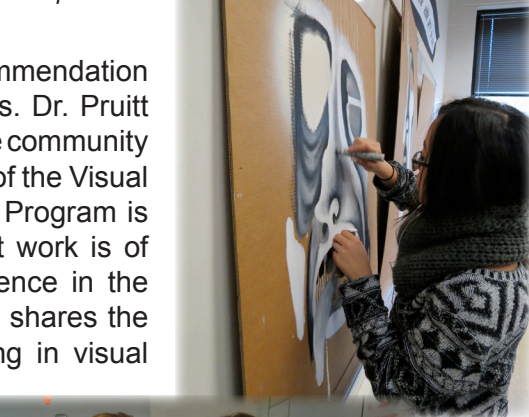
Congratulations to Fox Chapel Area High School for this well-deserved honor.

For more information on this exemplary program, please visit the FCAHS website at: <http://www.fcasd.edu/> ||

MSA currently offers Programs of Distinction in 9 areas. For more information on Middle States Programs of Distinction visit our website.



Computer Art



Drawing



Photography



Ceramics and Fibers

Nearly 200 Schools Accredited or Reaccredited

At its April 2015 meeting, the Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools acted to accredit or reaccredit 179 schools, school systems, and other educational institutions in 14 states and 10 countries.

This achievement was earned by each school following a thorough self-study process and a successful accreditation Team Visit. As accreditation with the Middle States Association is recognized worldwide as a measure of school quality and public accountability, it is vital that each accreditation decision is fully informed and made with confidence and thorough consideration. For that reason each report goes through a comprehensive multi-tiered review process before coming to the Commissions for final approval.

As you may recall from your most recent MSA visit, the first review and recommendation comes from the Visiting Team. Their recommendation is based on their review of the self-study and their experience on the ground at the school during the evaluation visit. Their report and recommendation is then reviewed by the school's designated MSA Accreditation Officer who affirms the team's recommendation or provides additional feedback.

The report and staff analysis then are reviewed by one of MSA's three advisory committees: Domestic, Caribbean, or International. These advisory committees are made up of education leaders and experienced MSA volunteers from the respective region.

Many schools make good use of this time of review to begin work on the team's recommended areas of improvement and submit additional documentation on their progress before the Commissions' final action, clearing potential stipulations or monitoring issues before they are formally declared.

Finally, the committees and the full Commissions meet biannually to review each report and make the final determination.

By the time the final action is taken, every report has been reviewed by peer evaluators on the ground, MSA staff with expertise in MSA requirements, and educational leaders with a cultural understanding of the school's circumstances and a deep understanding of school improvement through accreditation.

Following the extensive review that has taken place over the last few months, we are proud to share the following full list of schools, school systems, and other educational institutions that earned accreditation or reaccreditation in Spring 2015:

Spring 2015 Accreditation Actions

Accreditation

Arizona

Graduation Solutions, LLC, Mesa, AZ
(Initial Accreditation)

Delaware

Delmarva Christian High School,
Georgetown, DE
Nativity Preparatory School of Wilmington,
Inc., Wilmington, DE
Padua Academy, Wilmington, DE

Florida

Florida Christian School, Miami, FL
Trinity Christian School, Jacksonville, FL
Westwood Christian School, Miami, FL

Illinois

Chicago Excel Academy, Chicago, IL
(Initial Accreditation)

Maryland

Calvary Christian Academy, Cresaptown,
MD
Calvert Education Services, Hunt Valley,
MD
Immaculate Conception School, Elkton,
MD
Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School,
Berlin, MD

Massachusetts

Virtual High School (The), Maynard, MA

New Jersey

Camden Catholic High School, Cherry Hill,
NJ
Christian Brothers Academy, Lincroft, NJ
Friends School Mullica Hill, Mullica Hill, NJ
Gramon Family of Schools, Fairfield, NJ
Glenview Academy, Fairfield, NJ
Gramon School (The), Fairfield, NJ

New Beginnings/New Beginnings
Annex, Fairfield, NJ
Immaculate Heart Academy, Twp.
Washington, NJ
Lawrenceville School (The), Lawrenceville,
NJ
Marine Academy of Science and
Technology, Sandy Hook, NJ
Middletown High School – North,
Middletown, NJ
New Alliance Academy, Paramus, NJ
Newgrange School (The), Hamilton, NJ
(Initial Accreditation)
Paul VI High School, Haddonfield, NJ
Phillipsburg School District, Phillipsburg,
NJ
Andover Morris Elementary School,
Phillipsburg, NJ
Barber Elementary School,

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Nearly 200 Schools Accredited or Reaccredited (continued)

(continued from page 3)

Phillipsburg, NJ
 Early Childhood Learning Center,
 Phillipsburg, NJ
 Freeman Elementary School,
 Phillipsburg, NJ
 Green Street Elementary School,
 Phillipsburg, NJ
 Phillipsburg High School, Phillipsburg,
 NJ
 Phillipsburg Middle School,
 Phillipsburg, NJ
 Rumson Country Day School (The),
 Rumson, NJ
 Saint Mary High School, Rutherford, NJ*
 Seneca High School, Tabernacle, NJ
 The Pennington School, Pennington, NJ
 Trinity Christian School, Montville, NJ
(Initial Accreditation)
 Wilberforce School (The), Princeton
 Junction, NJ *(Initial Accreditation)*
 YingHua International School, Princeton,

NJ *(Initial Accreditation)*

New York

Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School,
 Brooklyn, NY
 Christian Brothers Academy of Albany,
 Albany, NY
 Darrow School, New Lebanon, NY
 Iona Preparatory School, New Rochelle,
 NY
 Lewiston-Porter High School, Youngstown,
 NY*
 Magen David Yeshivah Celia Esses High
 School, Brooklyn, NY
 McQuaid Jesuit High School, Rochester,
 NY
 North Shore High School, Glen Head, NY
 Notre Dame High School, Elmira, NY
 Port Chester High School, Port Chester,
 NY
 Rambam Mesivta, Lawrence, NY
 Saint Edmund Preparatory High School,
 Brooklyn, NY

Saint Jean Baptiste High School, New
 York, NY
 Saint John Villa Academy, Staten Island,
 NY
 Saint Mary School, Canandaigua, NY
 Saint Mary School, East Islip, NY
 Storm King School (The), Cornwall-on-
 Hudson, NY
 Xavier High School, New York, NY

Pennsylvania

Achievement House Cyber Charter School,
 Exton, PA *(Initial Accreditation)*
 Blackstone Career Institute, Allentown, PA
 Blessed Virgin Mary School, Darby, PA
 Cumberland Valley Christian School,
 Chambersburg, PA
 Delaware Valley School District, Milford, PA
 Delaware Valley Elementary School,
 Milford, PA
 Delaware Valley High School, Milford,
 PA
 Delaware Valley Middle School,
 Milford, PA
 Dingman-Delaware Elementary
 School, Dingmans Ferry, PA
 Dingman-Delaware Middle School,
 Dingmans Ferry, PA
 Dingman-Delaware Primary School,
 Dingmans Ferry, PA
 Shohola Elementary School, Shohola,
 PA
 DeRielle Cosmetology Academy,
 Mechanicsburg, PA
 Excel Academy South, Philadelphia, PA
(Initial Accreditation)
 Gesu School, Philadelphia, PA
 Holy Family Regional Catholic School,
 Levittown, PA
 Holy Name of Jesus School, Harrisburg,
 PA
 Holy Rosary Regional Catholic School,
 Plymouth Meeting, PA
 Kiski School, Saltsburg, PA
 Lititz Christian School, Lititz, PA
 Manchester Academic Charter School,
 Pittsburgh, PA*
 Notre Dame Elementary School, East
 Stroudsburg, PA
 Our Lady of Calvary School, Philadelphia,
 PA
 Our Lady of Lourdes Regional School,
 Coal Township, PA
 Our Mother of Perpetual Help School,
 Ephrata, PA
 Penn Foster Career Institute, Scranton,
 PA*
 Queen of Angels Regional Catholic School,
 Willow Grove, PA
 Redeemer Lutheran School, Verona, PA

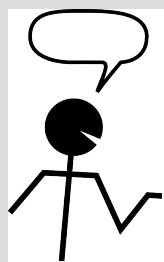
Volunteer Voices

Did you know that more than 1,200 volunteers served on MSA accreditation teams this school year?

The Middle States staff would like to thank these volunteers for their service. It is their sacrifice of time and energy that helps us assure continuous improvement in our member schools.

Haven't served on a team yet?

Here's what recent volunteers have to say about the experience...



"It challenged me as a professional and I liked coming together with a group to work towards improving a school."

Stephanie Dixon
 Fairfield, New Jersey

"The visit helped me frame and understand the full accreditation process, which will be valuable for me as I lead my school through self-study in preparation for our visit next school year."

Ginger Carlson
 Greece

"I always enjoy doing these because I learn more about other schools and the process of education."

Brian Lari
 Springfield, Pennsylvania

"Being part of an MSA accreditation visit is the best form of PD for a school leader in my opinion!"

Steve Charbonneau
 Democratic Republic of Congo

"Always hard to be away from school; always come away feeling the experience well worthwhile."

Donald B. Beebe
 Erdenheim, Pennsylvania

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Nearly 200 Schools Accredited or Reaccredited (continued)

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(Initial Accreditation)

Sacred Heart School, Oxford, PA
Saint Anastasia School, Newtown Square, PA
Saint Cecilia School, Philadelphia, PA
Saint Christopher School, Philadelphia, PA
Saint Eugene School, Primos, PA
Saint Francis of Assisi School, Springfield, PA
Saint Genevieve School, Flourtown, PA
Saint James School, Erie, PA
Saint Laurence School, Upper Darby, PA
Saint Leo the Great School, Lancaster, PA
Saint Margaret Mary School, Harrisburg, PA
Saint Mary Magdalen School, Media, PA
Saint Norbert School, Paoli, PA
Saint Pius X School, Broomall, PA
Saints Philip and James School, Exton, PA
Saints Simon and Jude School, West Chester, PA
Shalom Christian Academy, Chambersburg, PA
Veritas Press Scholars Academy, Lancaster, PA* (Initial Accreditation)
Villa Maria Academy High School, Malvern, PA
Vision Quest Academy – Big Lodge, Franklin, PA
Wyoming Valley Montessori School, Kingston, PA

Puerto Rico

Academia Bautista de Puerto Nuevo,

Caparra Heights, PR
Academia Santa Maria del Camino, Bayamon, PR*
Colegio Congregacion Mita, San Juan, PR
Colegio San Ignacio De Loyola, San Juan, PR
Elementary School U.P.R., San Juan, PR*

Washington, DC

Friendship Public Charter Schools, Washington, DC
Friendship Blow Pierce Elementary and Middle, Washington, DC
Friendship Chamberlain Elementary and Middle, Washington, DC
Friendship Collegiate Academy, Washington, DC
Friendship Southeast Academy, Washington, DC
Friendship Technology Preparatory Academy, Washington, DC
Friendship Woodridge Elementary and Middle, Washington, DC
National Collegiate Preparatory Public Charter High School, Washington, DC (Initial Accreditation)

Outside of the United States

Amazon Valley Academy, Brazil (Initial Accreditation)
American College of Sofia (The), Bulgaria
American Community School of Athens, Greece
American International School of Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa
American School of Bombay, India

Aquinas American School, Spain (Initial Accreditation)
GDQ International Christian School, Albania (Initial Accreditation)

Removal of Stipulations

American School of Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Colegio San Benito, Humacao, PR*
International Community School of Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire
QSI – International School of Shenzhen, China
Renaissance Academy Charter School, Phoenixville, PA*

Probationary Accreditation

Holy Family School, Phoenixville, PA
Jewish Educational Center, Elizabeth, NJ

Program of Distinction

Fox Chapel Area High School, Pittsburgh, PA (Visual Arts)

Recognition of Accreditation

Forest Trail Academy, Wellington, FL
Inspiration Academy, Bradenton, FL
Koolau Baptist Academy, Kaneohe, HI
NOVA International School, Skopje, Macedonia
Santiago Christian School, Dominican Republic
Westwood Baptist Academy, Poplar Bluff, MO

*Accredited with Stipulations

You Spoke, We Listened!



Every two years MSA-CESS conducts a Member Survey to offer our accredited schools/institutions the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with the MSA Accreditation process, programs, and services. Thank you to the hundreds of members who provided valuable input!

We were pleased to see that 95% said the accreditation process is a major factor in **improving or maintaining student and organizational performance**; and 92% said **the accreditation process is a catalyst for change** and strategic planning.

Our accredited members expressed a **high level of satisfaction with the dedication and expertise of, and communication with the MSA Staff**. We look forward to continuing to provide our highest level of service as we support our members in the process of school improvement through accreditation.

The survey also helped us confirm some of our identified areas for growth, including the opportunity for more interaction among members and more online trainings and materials.

Coming in Fall 2015:
Best Practices from members shared on MSA-CESS website
Weekly Interactive Online Team Member Briefings
Online Training Modules