

Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools

The Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools is a non-profit organization authorized by the United States Department of Education to accredit elementary and secondary schools in the mid-Atlantic states. Accreditation by one of the six regional accrediting agencies ensures that schools offer quality education to the students they serve.

Today, more than 3,000 schools, school districts and educational institutions in the mid-Atlantic region, throughout the United States and in more than 85 countries around the globe are accredited by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS).

MSA-CESS standards, protocols and accreditation services reflect the latest research on school effectiveness and school improvement and uses volunteers trained in critical peer review to provide an external validation of a school's or school district's performance.

We know what schools need to do to improve. MSA accreditation provides its members with that knowledge and the processes necessary for school improvement and improved levels of student performance. Recent research suggests that the critical differences between schools that make the grade and those that are struggling are the:

- Degree to which the school clearly understands what it needs to do to improve;
- Extent to which the plan to improve is supported by school and community stakeholders;
- Capacity of and commitment by the school to implement and sustain its plan to improve over time.

Middle States accreditation helps a school critically review its current performance, set a course for improvement and builds the necessary commitment and support necessary for significant and long term improvement.

Accreditation helps ensure that schools are making the most efficient use of the available resources. Middle States accredited schools are better positioned to ensure that time, talent and money are used in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Whether a school or district looks to build on its record of high performance and solid reputation or is interested in setting a new course for continuous school improvement, Middle States Accreditation is a catalyst for making every school and ultimately every school district better.

Purpose of High School Accreditation

High school accreditation is a must for any public or private institution that wishes to remain competitive and maintain a legitimate reputation. Many colleges and universities no longer accept students with diplomas or credits from non-accredited schools; therefore,

selecting a secondary school with recognized accreditation is paramount to a student's ability to succeed in post-secondary endeavors.

History

- Accreditation began with post-secondary institutions in the late 1800s and was federally regulated in 1965 when Congress enacted the Higher Education Act. The history of high school accreditation varies by region and state and is presently not a federal requirement. Some states, such as Pennsylvania, have a strong history of accrediting secondary and/or college preparatory schools since 1887, while secondary schools in California have only been concerned with accreditation since 2006 at the behest of the University of California (UC) system.

Significance

- Weariness on behalf of colleges, universities and employers has led to a push for legitimate accreditation of institutions offering diplomas, degrees, licensing, and certifications. Accreditation by a recognized association conveys to the public and institutions of higher learning that the high school's coursework, services, educators and plans for student achievement have met stringent state and federal guidelines. If a student has obtained a diploma from an institution deemed to be a "diploma mill," post-secondary educational opportunities and/or employability may be extremely limited.

Benefits

- There are several benefits to high school accreditation, the first being certification and validation to the public that the institution provides appropriate courses for its students. Accreditation also requires that high schools continually improve their programs and services through regular evaluation, data analysis, and revision of outdated practices. If a high school has been accredited by a recognized association, students' coursework will be transferable to other secondary institutions and will also be recognized by area colleges and universities during the application process.

The Process of Accreditation

Accredited schools are those that have undergone and passed an extensive evaluation which verifies that the schools' educational programs meet rigorous standards of quality. The accreditation process begins with school personnel conducting their own reflective self-study followed by an external evaluation by peers from other schools and final review and action by the Middle States Commission.

Notre Dame's Planning Team began the self-study process in November 2011. Members have met monthly to review and evaluate the school's Mission, Beliefs, Graduate Profile, and student performance objectives. To date, the Team has updated the Mission and Belief Statements and approved a Graduate Profile. New student performance objectives have been adopted for implementation over the next accreditation period and are in the process of passing a technical review by the MSA-CESS. Once approved, the faculty and staff will complete the task of developing action plans to meet these objectives.

Click the links listed below to view the following documents:

Mission Statement

Belief Statements

Graduate Profile

Student Performance Objectives

Accreditation Standards

The Middle States Standards for Accreditation are qualitative statements that reflect research-based best practices for schools. They include:

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.

- *f* Philosophy/Mission
- *f* Governance and Leadership
- *f* School Improvement Planning
- *f* Finances
- *f* Facilities
- *f* School Climate and Organization

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

- *f* Health and Safety
- *f* Educational Program
- *f* Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning
- *f* Student Services
- *f* Student Life and Student Activities
- *f* Information Resources and Technology

Notre Dame High School parents, students, faculty/staff, and other stakeholders will complete Standards surveys that investigate all aspects of the school. The compiled results will be reported to the peer review group who will make its recommendation for accreditation to MSA-CESS based on the school's compliance with these Standards for Accreditation.

Accreditation for Growth (AFG)

Self-study and accreditation protocols set forth the procedures for conducting a self-study by institutions seeking accreditation by the Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools. As with the Standards for Accreditation, the Commissions provide protocols that are specific to each category of education institutions they accredit. Therefore, each protocol consists of the following components:

- The procedures for conducting a self-study;
- The procedures for conducting a self-assessment of the degree to which the institution meets the appropriate Standards for Accreditation; and
- Requirements for accreditation that are specific to the category of institution and the protocol

Accreditation for Growth (AFG) is a self-study and accreditation protocol that is based on the principles of strategic planning. *AFG* focuses the school primarily on the most important work of schools and educational communities—improving student performance. In this era of accountability, student performance is and should be the primary focus of educators, schools and their communities. Quite simply, the *AFG* protocol seeks to change the traditional culture of focusing primarily on the inputs of growth and improvement (facilities, program, services, etc.) to focusing on the outputs desired in terms of student performance.

Notre Dame used the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol to successfully attain its accredited status in November 2006. This is the school's second renewal request using this protocol. If granted, Notre Dame High School will maintain its accreditation by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools until 2020.

Notre Dame High School Mission Statement

Revised and approved by the MS Planning Team on 2/16/2012

Notre Dame is a Catholic diocesan co-educational high school dedicated to the Blessed Mother. Our school community is committed to enriching the spiritual, academic, physical, and emotional development of our students. Through Christ-like behavior and excellence in teaching, our students will experience personal growth that embraces Christian values, intellectual curiosity, good citizenship, and the power of faith.

Notre Dame High School Belief Statements

Revised and approved by the MS Planning Team on 3/8/2012

We believe that...

Notre Dame follows the Church's teachings based on Scripture, tradition, and Sacramental Life.

The Blessed Mother inspires and guides our faith journey.

Faith development is spurred by attitude and spread by actions.

Human life is sacred at every level of existence.

A diverse Catholic school community is a gift to be celebrated.

A strong academic curriculum enhanced by extra-curricular activities is a framework for success.

We challenge all students to reach their full potential.

Learning is a lifelong cooperative effort.

Holistic development is a crucial element of success.

All students have the right to a safe learning environment.

Good citizen is an outgrowth of all life's experiences.

We are accountable for our actions.

Notre Dame High School Graduate Profile

Developed and approved by the MS Planning Team on 4/26/12

Notre Dame's philosophy is to lead our students to understand and internalize the fact that God is an integral part of their lives. It is this relationship upon which all future personal relationships and their overall world view will take root, be shaped, and flourish. We trust that they will utilize the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and experiences that have molded their characters for ongoing spiritual, intellectual, and physical development as committed and compassionate Christians. Thus, our graduates will be ...

Educated in Spirit

- They will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of a personal relationship with God through prayer, service, stewardship, and spiritual development.
- They will have comprehensive knowledge of the Catholic faith and an appreciation of the search for truth by other religions.
- They will draw upon an informed conscience and a passion for justice rooted in gospel values to participate in the building of a humane, civic, and ecclesial community that respects the dignity of life.

Educated in Mind

- They will be life-long learners who have the intellectual, creative, technological, and organizational skills necessary to succeed in an academic environment and in the work world.
- They will be critical thinkers who are proficient at examining a situation and responding appropriately.
- They will develop an awareness of consequences for their actions and will make proper decisions based on Christian values.
- They will be effective communicators and collaborative workers who have the skills and leadership abilities to be productive contributors to the global society.
- They will be concerned citizens who recognize their obligation to participate in the democratic process.

Educated in Body

- They will demonstrate the capacity for developing mental, physical, and emotional wellness in themselves and embrace a positive attitude about the future.
- They will understand the physiological effects of lifestyle choices – including nutrition, exercise, and high-risk behaviors – on long-term health.
- They will respect others, value cultural differences, celebrate diversity, and act with integrity and honesty.

Notre Dame High School Objectives 2013-2020

Developed by the MS Planning Team in September, 2012 and approved by MSA-CSS on 10/16/12

Objective #1

By 2020, 100% of the Notre Dame High School students will demonstrate a personal commitment to corporal works of mercy through active involvement in community service.

a) 100% of the seniors will complete the required 25 hours of community service and 85% will exceed the requirement.

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

# of seniors	# / % Met requirement	# / % Exceeded requirement
All 178	166 / 93	142 / 80
Male 88	83 / 94	65 / 74
Female 90	83 / 92	77 / 85

b) 100% of the juniors will complete the required 25 hours of community service and 70% will exceed the requirement.

Baseline Year: 2012-2013

Baseline Data: Will be compiled at the end of the school year. Community service hours were not required for juniors prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

c) 100% of the sophomores will complete the required 15 hours of community service and 50% will exceed the requirement.

Baseline Year: 2012-2013

Baseline Data: Will be compiled at the end of the school year. Community service hours were not required for sophomores prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

d) 100% the freshmen will complete the required 15 hours of community service and 30% will exceed the requirement.

Baseline Year: 2012-2013

Baseline Data: Will be compiled at the end of the school year. Community service hours were not required for freshmen prior to the 2012-2013 school year.

Objective #2

By 2020 all Notre Dame High School students will demonstrate improved academic performance in math and science as measured by:

a) A 1 *percentage point* increase each year in the number of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students who pass their midterm and final math exams with a score ≥ 70 .

Baseline Year: 2011-2012*

2011-2012	Math								
	# of test takers / % who passed with scores ≥ 70								
Midterm Exam	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2012	115/90	57/88	58/93	10/90	26/96	75/89	4/75	4/75	9/100
Class of 2013	115/86	57/82	58/90	1/100	49/86	50/90	15/73	12/92	6/100
Class of 2014	109/93	80/90	29/96	-	36/92	52/92	21/95	16/94	6/83
Class of 2015	147/90	73/86	74/95	-	64/97	63/81	20/100	18/83	7/100

2011-2012	Math								
	# of test takers / % who passed with scores ≥ 70								
Final Exam	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2012	101/86	51/80	50/92	-	26/88	71/89	4/25	3/0	9/78
Class of 2013	118/80	57/77	61/82	-	49/88	54/83	15/60	12/92	8/100
Class of 2014	112/93	76/93	27/90	-	38/92	53/92	21/98	16/94	8/88
Class of 2015	150/89	75/87	75/91	-	65/98	64/78	21/90	18/89	9/100

* *Aquinas* = special needs students who have an IEP in place

International = exchange students with I20 Visa (mainly from China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Spain, Mexico, & Zimbabwe)

b) A 1 *percentage point* increase each year in the number of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students who pass their midterm and final science exams with a score ≥ 70 .

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

2011-2012	Science								
	# of test takers / % who passed with scores ≥ 70								
Midterm Exam	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2012	97/94	43/95	54/92	4/75	41/95	36/100	15/80	15/80	2/100
Class of 2013	121/92	61/93	60/90	1/100	41/97	75/88	4/100	12/92	7/100
Class of 2014	108/81	78/82	30/80	-	17/94	90/79	1/100	15/47	6/67
Class of 2015	138/75	69/74	69/75	-	48/98	76/66	14/43	8/37	7/57

2011-2012	Science								
	# of test takers / % who passed with scores ≥ 70								
Final Exam	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2012	109/90	51/82	58/96	-	40/100	54/98	15/33	16/37	2/100
Class of 2013	124/90	61/87	63/94	-	41/95	79/87	4/100	12/92	9/78
Class of 2014	110/83	80/81	30/87	-	18/94	91/81	1/0	14/50	8/75
Class of 2015	141/88	70/89	71/87	-	50/98	78/86	13/61	8/62	9/89

c) A 3 point increase in the average score on the 11th grade PSAT/NMSQT math tests and a 5 point increase in the average score on the 10th grade PSAT/NMSQT math tests

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	PSAT Math								
	# of test takers / average math score								
	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2013 (grade 11)	68/49.4	31/50.5	37/48.4	1/77.0	29/53.8	35/44.5	3/42.3	6/40.8	2/69.0
Class of 2014 (grade 10)	47/45.9	31/48.7	16/40.4	-	24/50.4	20/40.8	3/44.0	4/40.7	4/62.0

d) A 25 point increase in the average score on the SAT math assessment tests

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	SAT Math								
	# of test takers / average math score								
	All	Male	Female	Asian	Hispanic	White	Black	Puerto Rican	Other
Class of 2012	153/504	70/513	83/496	15/613	6/493	118/499	3/-	3/-	2/-

e) A 20 *percentage point* increase in the percent of students who score ≥ 3 on the AP Calculus exam

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	AP Calculus			
	# of test takers / % who scored ≥ 3			
	All	Male	Female	International
Class of 2012	10 / 50	6 / 67	4 / 25	1 / 100

f) A 20 percentage point increase in the percent of students who score ≥ 3 on the AP Chemistry exam

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	AP Chemistry			
	# of test takers / % who scored ≥ 3			
	All	Male	Female	International
Class of 2012	6 /33	2 /50	4 / 25	1 / 0

Objective #3

By 2020 all Notre Dame High School students will demonstrate academic improvement in writing skills as measured by:

a) A .5 increase in the average score for 9th grade students on the post-course writing samples when compared to the average score on the pre-course writing samples.

Baseline Year: 2012-2013

Baseline Data: Score range for the writing samples is 0 - 4

2012-2013	Pre-Course Writing Scores								
	# of test takers / average score								
	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2016 (grade 9)	131/2.25	67/2.17	64/2.34	-	26/2.94	70/2.28	35/1.67	13/1.63	4/-

Baseline Data: Average post-course writing scores (to be determined at end of the year)

2012-2013	Post-Course Writing Scores								
	# of test takers / average score								
	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2016 (grade 9)									

b) A 5 point increase in the average score on the 11th grade PSAT/NMSQT writing skills test and a 3 point increase in the average score on the 10th grade PSAT/NMSQT test.

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	PSAT Writing								
	# of test takers / average writing skills score								
	All	Male	Female	AP	Honors	CP	Basic	Aquinas	Internat'l
Class of 2013 (grade 11)	68/50.1	31/48.8	37/51.1	3/62.3	7/55.4	51/50.4	7/37.0	6/40.0	2/45.0
Class of 2014 (grade 10)	47/46.9	31/48.4	16/43.9	-	7/58.0	29/48.0	11/36.8	4/40.5	4/39.0

c) A 25 point increase in the average score on the SAT writing assessment test

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	SAT Writing								
	# of test takers / average writing score								
	All	Male	Female	Asian	Hispanic	White	Black	Puerto Rican	Other
Class of 2012	153/511	70/504	83/516	15/535	6/517	118/514	3/-	3/-	2/-

d) Maintain the percentage of students who score ≥ 4 on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam

Baseline Year: 2011-2012

Baseline Data:

2011-2012	AP English Literature & Composition			
	# of test takers / % who scored ≥ 4			
	All	Male	Female	International
Class of 2012	5/80	2/100	3/67	-

Objective #4 (non AFG)

By 2020 all Notre Dame High School graduates will demonstrate proficient use of technology as an interpretive, creative, analytic, and remedial tool across the curriculum.

- a) *Aquinas* students will use the Kurzweil and Compass Learning software to supplement/remediate classroom learning.
- b) Students enrolled in lab-based science classes will use technology to complete online labs.
- c) Students enrolled in math and science classes will use calculators or other hand-held devices to supplement classroom learning and to prepare for standardized tests.
- d) Art and Design classes will utilize computer software to enhance projects & portfolios.
- e) Apps for i-pads and i-phones that support classroom learning will be used for instruction.
- f) Software designed to analyze and critique writing skills will be used where applicable.
- g) Updated hardware and software will be made available to all students.
- h) Professional development in the use and application of technology will be provided.