

middle states association of colleges and
schools

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION
of
Supplementary Education Organizations
(SEO)



Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS)
of the
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA)



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The Middle States Association is a non-profit association serving elementary, secondary, PK-12, and higher educational institutions through programs of self-study, evaluation, and accreditation, and other developmental services.

This edition of *Standards for Accreditation for Supplementary Education Organizations* is the primary statement of standards endorsed and approved by the Commission on Secondary Schools for use with middle level, secondary level, and postsecondary non-degree granting institutions offering supplementary education programs. Prior to formal approval, a review of the *Standards* was conducted to solicit comments from candidate institutions and other communities of interest.

CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Role of Standards in the Accreditation Process | 1 |
| Role of Indicators in the Accreditation Process | 2 |
| Contacting the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools | 3 |
| Summary of All Standards | 4-6 |
| Middle States Association Standards for Accreditation with Indicators | 7-13 |
| ◆ Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives | 8 |
| ◆ Governance, Leadership, and Planning | 8-10 |
| ◆ Organizational Design and Staff | 10 |
| ◆ Educational Program and Materials | 11 |
| ◆ Student Programs and Services | 11-12 |
| ◆ Resources | 12-13 |
| ◆ Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance | 13-14 |
| Some Helpful Definitions | 15 |

THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

Commission on Secondary Schools

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) was established in 1887 and is a non-governmental, non-profit, peer-administered organization. MSA provides leadership in improvement for its member institutions in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and various regions overseas.

MSA has three accrediting commissions. The Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) serves academic, degree-granting institutions and evaluates and accredits post-secondary institutions and programs. The Commission on Secondary Schools (MSCSS) evaluates and accredits institutions providing middle and/or secondary education; this includes career and technology schools that offer non-degree-granting post-secondary programs. The Commission on Elementary Schools (MSCES) serves institutions that provide middle, elementary, and preschool education.

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

THE ROLE OF STANDARDS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The following Commission on Secondary *Schools Standards for Accreditation of Supplementary Education Organizations* are qualitative and quantitative statements that reflect research-based best practices evident in organizations offering supplementary education at the middle, secondary and/or postsecondary levels. These standards should not be confused with content area standards that reflect measured student learning in various curriculum areas. The latter may be incorporated in the accreditation process in a variety of ways, but since they vary from organization-to-organization and state-to-state, it is not possible to designate a single set of content standards for all CSS accredited institutions.

The Commission on Secondary Schools *Standards for Accreditation of Supplementary Education Organizations* serve several important functions in the

accreditation process. First, the Commission, its advisory committees, and/or staff use the standards in various ways to make accreditation decisions. Since the same set of standards is used with all SEOs, the standards provide a consistent model of what quality looks like.

The Commission makes the final accreditation determination based on its own review of evaluative materials as well as the recommendations that evolve from the various reviews by the Visiting Team, staff, and advisory committees. The Commission conducts these multiple levels of review to ensure an informed and fair decision regarding accreditation.

Second, the standards serve as a school improvement mechanism. Since they are based on research and reflect best practices, they serve as a qualitative guide of what should be in place in an accredited supplementary education organization. The standards are not designed to make all SEOs look alike. Rather, the Commission on Secondary Schools' accreditation process respects the individual nature and character of each supplementary education organization. The diversity of the institutions in membership with CSS makes this important principle clear. Though the standards for each SEO are the same, there are significant differences in the ways adherence to standards can be demonstrated.

THE ROLE OF INDICATORS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Each standard is defined further by indicators. Indicators amplify the standard, indicate best practices for the standard, and indicate various means for demonstrating that the standard is met. The indicators should not be used as a checklist. Instead, the SEO, evaluators, advisory committee, and the Commission should view the indicators as evidence that the standard is met. SEOs and evaluators are encouraged to expand upon the indicators provided in order to emphasize unique characteristics of each school.

The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools' membership consists of a highly diverse group of institutions. To honor and provide for that diversity, the indicators provide multiple ways to demonstrate that the standards are met. The standards and their indicators also serve as guidelines for institutional improvement through planning and future development.. Though it is expected that all accredited SEOs will meet the standards, not all indicators will apply to every SEO as some indicators may not be applicable to every SEO. It is

imperative that the use of indicators respects the individual integrity of each SEO and that no attempt to conform a SEO's operation to this set of indicators be made.

THE MSCSS DEFINITION OF SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS

The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools defines a supplementary education organization by the following characteristics:

- is non-degree, non-diploma granting
- offers programs generally outside of the normal school day and often outside of the school building
- offers programs that are educational (as opposed to recreational or avocational) in nature and that include significant features of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices found in comprehensive school settings
- is designed to meet narrowly focused curricular purposes
- often offers diagnostic, remedial, enrichment, or alternative instruction
- enrolls students generally on a part-time basis

CONTACTING THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS

For further information or assistance with the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools accreditation processes for Supplementary Education Organizations, please feel free to contact:

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**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION
COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

OF

**SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION
ORGANIZATIONS**

1. STANDARD: Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives

The Standard: The supplementary education organization has clearly written statements of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives that convey the general and specific purposes of its educational programs and that express expectations for quality in the delivery and results of its educational programs. Stakeholders in the outcomes of the supplementary education organization understand and accept the organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These documents are appropriate for the clients served and are reviewed periodically.

2. STANDARD: Governance, Leadership, and Planning

The Standard: The governance and administration work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the supplementary education organization through the establishment of policies and procedures and prudent oversight of the organization's operations. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. The administration of the organization provides a productive environment of learning and work, timely and open communication, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the supplementary education organization.

The corporate status of the supplementary education organization is clearly defined and there are no legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility. As appropriate, the SEO is approved for its operations by the civil authorities within the jurisdiction it is located.

The supplementary education organization makes use of strategic, long-range, and operational planning to continuously improve its educational programs and services. Improvement plans focus on student performance and organizational growth and engender continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization.

3. STANDARD: Organizational Design and Staff

The Standard: The structure of the supplementary education organization provides the vehicle for carrying out the established philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the educational program and support services. A clearly defined set of reporting relationships exists, and the staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to allow the effective delivery of quality education to students. Staff assessment procedures are in place, are clear to all involved, and are collaborative. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities and collegial relationships among staff and administration are evident and conducive to cooperative action. An appropriate program of professional development is provided to the staff.

4. STANDARD: Educational Programs and Materials

The Standard: The educational programs consist of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs that include appropriate standards, solid instructional pedagogy, and appropriate assessment based on research and best practices. The educational programs are

sufficiently financed, periodically reviewed, and mission-appropriate. They are developed to meet and address the needs of students and are designed to produce appropriate levels of student learning. Effective policies and practices regarding the educational programs are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Instructional materials and technology function as important tools to enhance instruction, as appropriate.

5. STANDARD: Student Programs and Services

The Standard: The supplementary education organization provides services to students that optimize their success in learning. Among the services provided are ethical admissions and placement practices, guidance and counseling, and appropriate assistance for success in learning, and accurate student records.

6. STANDARD: Resources

The Standard: A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The supplementary education organization's facilities (as appropriate), consisting of the site, building(s), and equipment, provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment that supports optimal student achievement and are appropriate to implement the stated philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the supplementary education organization.

Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. The business practices of the supplementary education organization promote confidence in the organization's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and to follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of funds are dedicated to the SEO's operations.

7. STANDARD: Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance

The Standard: The assessment of student learning outcomes enables students to monitor their own learning progress and allows teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. The performance of the supplementary education organization is assessed by examining areas such as student learning and performance, program evaluation, graduate success, and client satisfaction. Results of student learning and organizational performance are used to develop strategies for improving service and program quality. Assessment results are communicated appropriately to students and staff.

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION COMMISSION
ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION


WITH

INDICATORS

1. STANDARD: Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives

The Standard: The supplementary education organization has clearly written statements of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives that convey the general and specific purposes of its educational programs and that express expectations for quality in the delivery and results of its educational programs. Stakeholders in the outcomes of the supplementary education organization understand and accept the organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These documents are appropriate for the clients served and are reviewed periodically.

Indicators:

- All constituents of the supplementary education organization generally understand and accept its philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives.
- The supplementary education organization provides opportunities for representative constituents to offer input into the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.
- The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives and advertising and marketing of educational programs and services are consistent with ethical norms and demonstrate respect for and acceptance of persons of all races, creeds, and cultures.
- The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives are free of contradiction, ambiguity, and excessive abstraction and can be discussed by SEO authorities in terms of operation, action, movement, and direction.
- The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives  appropriate for the students enrolled.
- The philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives are periodically reviewed to ensure that the statements are appropriate to the needs of the students.
- The supplementary education organization takes steps to ensure potential students understand and support the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives upon enrolling new students.
- The philosophy, mission, beliefs and/or objectives are actively implemented and serve as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision-making as well as long-range planning.

2. STANDARD: Governance, Leadership, and Planning

The Standard: The governance and administration work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the supplementary education organization through the establishment of policies and procedures and prudent oversight of the organization's operations. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. The administration of the organization provides a productive environment of learning and work, timely and open communication, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the supplementary education organization.

The corporate status of the supplementary education organization is clearly defined and there are no legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility. As appropriate, the SEO is approved for its operations by the civil authorities within the jurisdiction it is located.

The supplementary education organization makes use of strategic, long-range, and operational planning to continuously improve its educational programs and services. Improvement plans focus on student performance and organizational growth and engender continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization.

Indicators:

- The status of the supplementary education organization is clear. No legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility exist. Partnerships and/or any corporate linkages are expressed as enforceable agreements.
- The supplementary education organization and the programs it operates are approved and/or recognized for their function by the civil authority within whose jurisdiction they are located.
- The governance and administration act ethically, consistently, and fairly in all dealings with parents, students, staff, and the community.
- The governance and administration work cooperatively to establish and maintain clearly formulated written policies and practices that are consistent with the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These policies and practices are reviewed regularly.
- The governance and administration maintain appropriate and constructive relations with constituencies served in the interest of serving the needs of the students.
- The governance and administration comply with all applicable statutes and governmental regulations.
- The governance and administration undertake operational, long range, and strategic planning aimed at accomplishing the SEO's philosophy, mission, and/or objectives.
- The governance uses a system for evaluating its own effectiveness in performing its duties.
- The governance focuses its activities on selecting, evaluating, and supporting the head of the supplementary education organization, policy development, planning, assessing the SEO's performance, and ensuring adequate resources to accomplish the SEO's philosophy, mission and/or objectives. Governance refrains from undermining the authority of the administration to conduct the daily operation of the SEO.
- The governance utilizes a clearly defined performance appraisal system for the head of the supplementary education organization. The appraisal is conducted with the knowledge and participation of the head of the supplementary education organization.
- The head of the supplementary education organization is accountable to the governance and is responsible for creating a productive learning environment and for the day-to-day operation of the supplementary education organization.
- The administration ensures that all SEO programs and activities are adequately and appropriately planned, supervised, resourced, and staffed with qualified personnel.
- Planning information includes historical data, baseline information, trend data, and projections. Data-driven decision-making enables the SEO to make critical judgments with confidence. The supplementary education organization maintains a disciplined knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment, and trends in its educational and business environment.
- A written improvement/strategic plan is developed and a major focus of improvement plans is student achievement and performance. Periodic review of improvement plans is

conducted to determine the extent to which outcomes meet expectations so that corrective actions can be initiated.

3. STANDARD: Organizational Design and Staff

The Standard: The structure of the supplementary education organization provides the vehicle for carrying out the established philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the educational program and support services. A clearly defined set of reporting relationships exists, and the staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to allow the effective delivery of quality education to students. Staff assessment procedures are in place, are clear to all involved, and are collaborative. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities and collegial relationships among staff and administration are evident and conducive to cooperative action. An appropriate program of professional development is provided to the staff.

Indicators:

- A clearly understood table of organization for the supplementary education organization exists with written job descriptions that specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
- Staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the total educational program and the students enrolled.
- Staff members possess the qualifications of education, preparation, experience, and commitment that contribute to effective learning. Staff members are assigned to work by reason of their training and/or expertise.
- There is a plan for professional development to ensure that knowledge and skills of staff members remain current.
- Designated, qualified leadership provides coordination and direction for the instruction and services the supplementary education organization provides.
- Leadership and staff work cooperatively to create a climate for teaching and learning that fosters the attainment of the SEO's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.
- Personnel policies and regulations for the operation of the organization are written and available to all employees.
- Procedures are in place for determining adequate compensation, arriving at reasonable workloads and acceptable working conditions, and defining just and fair treatment, professional satisfaction, and good general morale among all staff.
- A clearly defined system of appraisal of staff exists that is based on predetermined criteria. It is conducted with the knowledge of the staff member and reported in writing. Staff members have an opportunity to discuss and appeal any aspects of the appraisal.

4. STANDARD: Educational Programs and Materials

The Standard: The educational programs consist of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs that include appropriate standards, solid instructional pedagogy, and appropriate assessment based on research and best practices. The educational programs are sufficiently financed, periodically reviewed, and mission-appropriate. They are developed to meet and address the needs of students and are designed to produce appropriate levels of student learning. Effective policies and practices regarding the educational programs are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Instructional materials and technology function as important tools to enhance instruction, as appropriate.

Indicators:

- The educational program (including curriculum, instruction, and assessment) is clearly defined, approved by the SEO's governance, and is consistent with the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the SEO.
- The educational program defines desired student outcomes as expressed in terms of student understanding, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits.
- Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.
- Resources required to implement the educational program are available and utilized.
- Instructional materials are up-to-date, sufficient, and appropriately supported through adequate funds provided in an annual budget.
- Consideration is given to the students' ages and their varying ability levels. The instructional program is designed to meet students' needs consistent with the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.
- Curriculum and instruction policies and procedures provide direction to the staff and administration in the development, implementation, and improvement of the educational program.
- The educational program, policies and procedures, and other pertinent information relating to the student are available in printed form to students and parents.
- Educational programs are aligned with state and local requirements as necessary and are supported by adequate record-keeping and good communication.
- The scope, quantity, and quality of information resources and technology are adequate to support the total educational program and encourage students and staff to broaden and extend their learning.

5. STANDARD: Student Programs and Services

The Standard: The supplementary education organization provides services to students that optimize their success in learning. Among the services provided are ethical admissions and placement practices, guidance and counseling, appropriate assistance for success in learning, and accurate student records.

Indicators:

- Relationships between staff and students demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding
- Student records are current, comprehensive, and well-maintained. Standards for transcript control and use are known and observed.
- The supplementary education organization accounts for the presence of its students and meets all local regulations for maintaining their health and safety. Procedures for the termination of any student for cause are known and consistently applied.
- Follow-up studies for graduates and other former students are carried out, and the resultant data are used to determine the effectiveness of supplementary education organization programs.
- Productive relationships exist with students, parents, and where appropriate, the comprehensive educational institution, that the student regularly attends.
- Career awareness and counseling, information on financial aid, and guidance for parents are provided, as appropriate.
- Effective procedures for identifying and addressing the special needs of students are in place.
- The supplementary education organization has a well-defined and documented admissions process with a clear exposition of admissions criteria. Admission and placement procedures are well-administered, unbiased and equitable.
- Those wishing to enroll in the supplementary education organization are clearly informed of the philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the SEO, the nature and extent of educational programs and services available, tuition and fees, and expectations for satisfactory performance.
- The supplementary education organization accepts students who can reasonably be expected to succeed in its programs.

6. STANDARD: Resources

The Standard: The supplementary education organization's facilities consisting of the site, building(s), and equipment, provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment that supports optimal student achievement and a productive work environment for the staff, and that are appropriate to implement the stated philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the supplementary education organization.

Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. The business practices of the supplementary education organization promote confidence in the organization's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and to follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of funds are dedicated to the SEO's operations.

Indicators:

- All grounds, buildings, furnishings, and equipment are sufficiently maintained to meet the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives, including achievement of desired student learning outcomes.
- The premises are maintained in a safe and healthy condition and meet local, state and national fire safety standards, including fire extinguishers, a satisfactory fire alarm system, and other safety devices.
- The governance and the administration exercise prudent control over all financial operations, following accepted accounting principles and annual independent audit practices.
- Periodic audits are conducted by a qualified external agency.
- The instructional program and supporting services are developed in accordance with suitable short-term and long-range financial plans.
- Financial resources to attain the organization's philosophy, mission, and/or objectives are available and utilized appropriately.
- Levels of income and expenditure are in appropriate balance. Finances are currently stable, and projections indicate continuing stability.
- Students enrolling in the supplementary education organization are informed in advance of the financial obligations for attendance.

7. STANDARD: Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance

The Standard: The assessment of student learning outcomes enables students to monitor their own learning progress and allows teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. The performance of the supplementary education organization is assessed by examining areas such as student learning and performance, program evaluation, graduate success, and client satisfaction. Results of student learning and organizational performance are used to develop strategies for improving service and program quality. Assessment results are communicated appropriately to students and staff.

Indicators:

- The supplementary education organization identifies specific criteria for assessing student learning and organizational performance.
- The supplementary education organization utilizes appropriate and varied methods to assess student learning and organizational performance.
- Student progress is regularly evaluated and accurately interpreted and reported in an understandable manner.
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned into a coherent system consistent with the supplementary education organization's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives.
- Assessment results are used regularly in evaluating the effectiveness of the supplementary education organization's curriculum and instructional practices in order to develop strategies for improving student learning.

- All teachers and other appropriate SEO personnel commit to, participate in, and share in the accountability for student learning and organizational performance.
- Communication regarding students' progress and needs is regular, productive, and meaningful.
- A monitoring system is in place to provide current and longitudinal data on student learning and organizational performance.
- Assessment of student learning is the primary indicator for documenting the effectiveness of the supplementary education organization's program.

SOME HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

As schools engage with the Middle States Accreditation Standards, a few definitions may be helpful.

Governance—refers to the group or individuals charged with overseeing the direction of the school; may be a governing body, Board of Trustees, Board of Education, advisory committee, or some other configuration

Stakeholders—refers to those individuals or groups that have a stake in the future of the school; may be staff, administration, students, parents, Board members, community members, alumni, business partners, and the like

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

Mission – refers to the unifying theme that illuminates the reason for the existence of the supplementary education organization, the audience that it serves, and the organization’s distinctive character.

Beliefs – refers to the ethical core of moral behavior and conduct that support the mission.

Objectives – refers to the goals that provide focus for improvement efforts and guide daily conduct of business in the supplementary education organization.