

## ALIGNING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS TO THE MY VOICE™ SURVEYS: THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND 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 school improvement for its member schools in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, and Africa.

Schools seeking MSA accreditation must meet certain standards, engage in continuous improvement, and host quality assurance reviews. The My Voice Surveys are an innovative tool for schools to evaluate the twelve standards as well as to provide insights for overall school improvement. There are three My Voice Surveys: one for students, one for staff, and one for parents. The charts on the following pages align the twelve standards with selected statements from each of the surveys. Please note this represents only a sampling of the surveys' statements. Each complete instrument can be viewed at [My Voice Surveys](#).

Before reviewing the charts, the Ninth Standard bears special mention. Standard 9 states:

### **Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning**

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

Among other requirements, Standard 9 calls for

- Assessment of student learning and performance to be aligned with curriculum and instruction in a coherent system consistent with the school's philosophy/mission;
- Assessment results to be analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor;
- Assessment results to be used to make decisions regarding allocation of resources;
- The assessment of student learning and performance to enable students to monitor their own learning progress and teachers to adapt their instruction to students' specific learning needs;
- Assessment methods and content to address suitable social, emotional, physical, and cognitive/language goals for students;
- Assessments to take into account recent, reliable research on child development and growth;
- Assessments to reflect understanding of the unique needs and backgrounds of each student;
- Members of the staff to work collaboratively with colleagues and families to review data about learners' progress and to develop appropriate strategies for continued progress;
- Families to be viewed as an important source of information and insights about students;
- The school to communicate its assessment policies and practices to the total school community (e.g., via parent handbooks, web sites, teacher handbooks, policy manuals).

Based on over twenty years of research and decades of professional experience asking students, staff, and parents about their perceptions of their school, the My Voice Survey can help schools seeking accreditation broaden and deepen their assessment systems by accessing the voice of all stakeholders. In addition to showing evidence of a school's effort to achieve all twelve standards, the surveys themselves are a safe, valid, effective, and reliable way to fulfill the Ninth Standard's expectation of a school that "systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources."

My Voice Student Survey—Selected Statements	Accreditation Standards										
	1. Philosophy/ Mission	2. Governance & Leadership	3. School Improvement	4. Finance & 5. Facilities	6. School Climate & Organization	7. Health & Safety	8. Ed. Program & 12. IT/Resource	9. Assessment	10. Student Services	11. Student Life & Activities	
School is a welcoming and friendly place.				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Students respect teachers.				✓	✓	✓	✓				
Tests are an important part of my education.			✓		✓		✓	✓			
I enjoy being at school.	✓				✓		✓			✓	
I feel comfortable asking questions in class.					✓		✓				
Student council represents all students at school.		✓			✓					✓	
I believe I can be successful.	✓		✓		✓					✓	
I feel accepted for who I am at school.				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.			✓		✓		✓				
My teachers present lessons in different ways.			✓		✓		✓		✓		
I push myself to do better academically.	✓		✓		✓		✓				
I see myself as a leader.		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	
I believe I can make a difference in this world.	✓		✓		✓					✓	
I have difficulty fitting in at school.				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Teachers care about me as an individual.				✓	✓		✓				
Teachers make school an exciting place to learn.				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
At school I am encouraged to be creative.			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Other students see me as a leader.		✓	✓		✓					✓	
Teachers expect me to be successful.			✓		✓		✓				
Teachers care if I am absent from school.				✓	✓	✓					
I give up when schoolwork is difficult.					✓		✓				
My classes help me understand what is happening in my everyday life.			✓		✓		✓			✓	
I am afraid to try something if I think I might fail.			✓		✓		✓				
Teachers encourage students to make decisions.		✓	✓		✓		✓				
My parents feel comfortable talking to my teachers.				✓	✓			✓			
I am proud of my school.			✓	✓	✓					✓	
If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk.					✓	✓	✓		✓		
Teachers recognize me when I try my best.					✓		✓	✓	✓		
I enjoy participating in my classes.				✓	✓		✓				
Teachers help me learn from my mistakes.					✓		✓	✓	✓		
I work hard to reach my goals.	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Teachers respect students.					✓	✓	✓		✓		
I put forth my best effort at school.			✓		✓		✓			✓	
Teachers think I can be successful.			✓		✓		✓		✓		
I am a good decision maker.		✓			✓					✓	
I think it is important to set high goals.			✓		✓		✓			✓	
Students respect each other.			✓		✓	✓				✓	
Getting good grades is important to me.					✓		✓	✓			
What I learn in school will benefit my future.	✓		✓		✓		✓				
I know the goals my school is working on this year.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						

My Voice Staff Survey—Selected Statements	Accreditation Standards										
	1. Philosophy/ Mission	2. Governance & Leadership	3. School Improvement	4. Finance & 5. Facilities	6. School Climate & Organization	7. Health & Safety	8. Ed. Program & 12. IT/Resource	9. Assessment	10. Student Services	11. Student Life & Activities	
Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work.	√	√	√		√		√				
Central office understands the unique culture of our school.	√	√	√		√				√	√	
We communicate effectively in our building.	√	√		√	√		√	√		√	
I am proud of my school.	√			√	√		√				
I am involved in school-wide decisions.	√	√		√	√		√	√			
I know the goals my school is working on this year.	√	√		√	√		√				
Building administration knows my professional goals.	√	√	√		√		√				
Staff respect each other.		√			√	√	√			√	
Meaningful professional development opportunities exist in my district.		√	√		√		√	√	√		
Building administration is accessible to me.		√		√	√				√		
I feel valued for my unique skill and talents.		√	√	√	√		√			√	
At school I am encouraged to be creative.					√		√		√	√	
I know my students' hopes and dreams.		√		√	√		√			√	
Students respect me.		√		√	√	√	√		√		
Our school is a dynamic and creative learning environment.	√		√		√		√	√		√	
I respect students.		√		√	√	√	√		√	√	
I encourage students to make decisions.		√		√	√		√			√	
I feel confident working with students with special needs.		√			√		√		√		
If I have a problem, I have a colleague with whom I can talk.				√	√	√	√		√		
I receive constructive feedback from colleagues.				√	√		√		√		
I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.		√		√	√	√	√	√	√		
I seek out opportunities to learn new things.			√		√		√	√	√		
Continuing my education is important to my future.			√		√		√		√		
I see myself as a leader.		√		√	√						
I have a colleague at school who is a positive role model for me.		√			√				√		
Building administration is open to new ideas.		√	√	√	√		√	√	√		
My colleagues see me as a leader.		√			√						
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.		√		√	√	√	√			√	
I communicate effectively with parents.		√		√	√		√	√			

My Voice Parent Survey—Selected Statements	Accreditation Standards										
	1. Philosophy/ Mission	2. Governance & Leadership	3. School Improvement Finance & Facilities	4. Finance & Facilities	5. School Climate & Organization	6. School Climate & Organization	7. Health & Safety	8. Ed. Program & 12. IT/Resource	9. Assessment	10. Student Services	11. Student Life & Activities
I know the goals my child’s school is working on this year.	√	√	√	√	√		√				
School is preparing my child well for the future.	√		√		√		√		√	√	
I am actively involved in my child’s education.			√		√		√				
My input and opinions are valued at my child’s school.		√		√	√			√			
Teachers help my child learn from mistakes.		√	√		√	√	√		√		
Teachers encourage my child to make decisions.		√			√		√			√	
My child feels comfortable asking questions in class.		√			√	√	√				
Teachers at my child’s school make it exciting to learn.					√		√				
Teachers let me know when my child does well in school.				√	√			√			
I am proud of my child’s school.	√		√	√	√				√	√	
Parent evenings/meetings are worth attending.		√		√	√					√	
I feel comfortable going to parent-teacher conferences.				√	√	√	√	√			
Teachers expect my child to be successful.			√		√		√	√			
If my child has a problem, there is a teacher he/she can talk to.					√	√	√		√	√	

**KEY TO THE 12 STANDARDS**

**1. Philosophy/Mission**

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

**2. Governance and Leadership**

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

**3. School Improvement Planning**

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

**4. Finances\***

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

**5. Facilities\***

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

**6. School Climate and Organization**

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

**7. Health and Safety**

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

**8. Educational Program\***

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

**9. Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning**

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

**10. Student Services**

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

**11. Student Life and Student Activities**

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

**12. Information Resources and Technology\***

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

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\* Standards 4 & 5 and 8 & 12 were combined for reasons of similarity and overlap.