



HELPING STUDENTS FEEL SAFE BY DEMONSTRATING THE BEST OF WHO WE ARE

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

After the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. last month, I heard an interview with one of the students who pointed out he was born after Columbine and has never known a feeling of complete safety.

This struck me. The fact that an 18-year-old student has never felt totally safe speaks to a deeper concern and a more insidious symptom of our society.

Every day, our students are bombarded with threatening information, and many are confronted with real-life threats more frequently than we can imagine. They are exposed to crime, terrorism, wars, and natural disasters. Movies, TV, social media, music and games feed their imaginations with images and possibilities that without context and guidance from the adults in their lives can result in a distorted view of the world. It is a view that promotes a sense of fear and insecurity that in reality is not matched by the facts of the world we live in.

At the start of this year, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote an opinion piece titled "Why 2017 Was the Best Year in Human History."

He pointed out that a smaller share of the world's people were hungry, impoverished or illiterate than any time before. A smaller proportion of children died than ever before, and the proportion disfigured by disease and suffering from illness also fell.

Kristof went on to write: "The world is registering important progress, but it also faces mortal threats. The first belief should empower us to act on the second."

As educators, we are in a position to help correct the

distorted worldview that children seem to possess. We can educate both the students and their parents. We can address the social and emotional needs of our students and involve them in educational and social activities that demonstrate the best of who we are and who they can be.

As an example, look to Colegio San Ignacio, one of our member schools in Puerto Rico that was wracked by Hurricane Maria last September.

Despite damage to the school and the prolonged lack of electricity, the school community pulled together and was the first to re-open after Hurricane Maria. Student volunteers along with parents and teachers provided food, water filtration systems, clothes and other assistance to their neighbors hit hard by the hurricane.

"It not only allowed students to see other people's reality and how the hurricane had affected them, but also to realize that through their actions they could make a difference in the lives of others," Father Flavio L. Bravo, school president, told a Caribbean newspaper.

Yes, we need to make schools safer. And yes, I would like to see fewer guns in our country and more regulations about who can purchase and own them. But that is not a solution to the bigger issue of children not feeling safe.

Making our schools hard targets ironically would miss the target of making our students truly feel safe. To do that, we need to help students see all the positive and promising things that far outnumber those that are so frightening.



Henry G. Cram, Ed.D

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MIDDLE STATES EMPLOYEES HEAD BACK TO CLASS FOR READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY

In celebration of Read Across America Day, March 2, Middle States employees shared their favorite books with students at Saint Anthony of Padua School in Camden, N.J.

Read Across America Day, sponsored by the National Education Association, celebrates Dr. Seuss's birthday and the joys of reading for children and adults alike.

Motivating children to read is an important factor in student achievement and creating lifelong successful readers. Research has shown that children who are motivated and spend more time reading do better in school.

Saint Anthony of Padua School serves more 180 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 8th. Ninety-four percent of the student body is Hispanic. The school is part of the Catholic Partnership School network in Camden and is accredited by Middle States.

Thank you to School Principal and Middle States Commissioner Mary Burke, Ed.D., along with the students, teachers and staff for their warm welcome and enthusiasm for reading.



MIDDLE STATES ACCREDITS FIRST LEARNING SERVICES PROVIDER IN PUERTO RICO

Congratulations to Forward Learning, the first learning services provider in Puerto Rico to earn accreditation by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Forward Learning integrates innovative teaching strategies with technology to develop 21st century skills in students and teachers of public and private schools in Puerto Rico, as well as the Dominican Republic and Spain.

Recognizing that one-size-does-not fit all when it comes to the accreditation process, Middle States offers a unique accreditation protocol designed specifically for learning services providers.

Currently, Middle States accredits more than 50 learning services providers throughout the United States and now Puerto Rico.



DID YOU KNOW? MIDDLE STATES OFFERS PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION IN SCHOOL COUNSELING



The first week of February each year marks National School Counseling Week, which focuses public attention on the unique contribution of professional school counselors within U.S. school systems and how students are different as a result of what school counselors do.

At Middle States, we have long realized the importance of school counseling programs, not only in meeting the academic needs of students, but also in meeting their emotional and social needs.

Our School Counseling Program of Distinction recognizes schools with a comprehensive and coherent school counseling program that features counselors who advocate for ensuring equity in student access to all the school's educational opportunities.

- Does your school promote a systemic approach to its school counseling program with measurable outcomes and increased accountability?

- Is your school counseling program supported by administration, governing body, faculty, parents, community and other stakeholders?
- Are your school counseling services age and developmentally appropriate and responsive to the particular needs of your students?
- Are your school counselors given a leadership role in providing services to students?
- Are your school counselors proficient in using student data to influence systemic changes aligning with the school's mission?

These are just some of the hallmarks of a School Counseling Program of Distinction.

To apply for School Counseling Program of Distinction or to learn more, contact Dan Rufo, Director of Accreditation, at 267.284.5041 or drufu@msa-cess.org.

Middle States also offers Programs of Distinction in Early Childhood Education, Global Literacies, Music, Service Learning, STEM, Visual Arts and World Languages.

ST. FRANCIS PREP'S MUSIC PROGRAM SETTING THE BAR



Congratulations to St. Francis Preparatory School in Queens, N.Y. for being invited to present at the 2018 Biennial National Association for Music Education and New York State School Music Association conference in February.

St. Francis was the first school to earn a Program of Distinction in Music from Middle States.

Robert Corbino, Ed.D., music department chairman, and Robert L. Johnston, director of string studies and Middle States co-internal coordinator, presented at the conference and discussed the value of the Program of Distinction recognition.

Their presentation introduced participants to real-life issues facing today's music educators as they transition from their collegiate training and certification assessments to their own classrooms and communities.

Read this Proven Practices case study for more information about the music program at St. Francis.

Q & A WITH MIDDLE STATES COMMISSIONER MICHAEL KUCHAR, PH.D.



Michael Kuchar, Ph.D. served as superintendent of the Bergenfield School District in Bergenfield, N.J. for more than a decade and is currently president of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators.

Dr. Kuchar has been involved with Middle States since the 1990s and has participated in over 15 school accreditation visits. A Middle States Commissioner for the past six years, Dr. Kuchar discusses his career path from seminarian to superintendent, his love of college basketball, and his lifelong hero. Hint: It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood.

Q. Why did you choose a career in education?

A. My first career choice was ministry, and I spent two years at a seminary of the Archdiocese of Newark. I changed career paths and began teaching theology at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx. From there, I was encouraged to go into guidance, so I spent my early years teaching at Cardinal Hayes and attending graduate school at Teachers College, Columbia University, where I received two master's degrees in counseling psychology. I then became a guidance counselor at Fordham Prep School and continued with my Ph.D. in language, learning and literacy at Fordham University.

Q. What do you consider one of the main benefits of Middle States accreditation?

A. I believe so strongly in the benefit of the self-study process and in the protocols Middle States provides to help schools and school systems put a strong strategic plan in place. The development of a system-wide accreditation protocol has made the Middle States accreditation process one of the best value-added activities a school system can undertake.

Q. Who inspires you and why?

A. My lifelong hero is Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood fame. He exemplifies what every educator should be like: child-centered, even-tempered and appreciative of the uniqueness of every individual.

Q. What do you enjoy doing when you're not working?

A. I do work a lot and have been teaching at the college level for over 12 years, while I have been a full-time administrator. Currently, I am mentoring 20 doctoral students on their dissertation. I find great joy and satisfaction doing this. I feel strongly that it adds value to the field of education. My non-work time I spend with family, my wife of 30 years and four children, ages 27 to 17.

Q. What is one thing that might surprise people about you?

A. I am a college basketball fanatic. I have been a longtime Seton Hall season ticket holder, have gone to the Big East tournament since 1986 and have been to three Final Four tournaments.

ARE YOU GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

MSA-CESS offers all workshops free of charge to members, and we have a series of workshops to meet your needs at every stage of the 7 year accreditation cycle. Sign up today!

After Accreditation:

Year 1.5: Maintaining the Momentum- recommended for after your accreditation, after your mid-term report, or both!

Year 2.5: Preparing your Mid-Term Report (online)

Year 4: Maintaining the Momentum

Year 5.5: Organizing for Self-Study

Year 6: Developing the Plan- Objectives and Action Plans

Year 6.5: Preparing to Host Your Team Visit (online)

For more information about any of these workshops, please visit the Member Resources section of our website.

Also- Don't forget that anytime in the accreditation process is a good time for your faculty to participate in on our online Team Member Briefings to learn more about becoming an accreditation team member. Serving as a peer reviewer is a wonderful, and free, professional development opportunity available to the faculty of all of our accredited schools! Visit our website to learn more.



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