



Southwestern Educational Society

SESOLION

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Accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools since 1991

TO: C. Rodríguez
FROM: E. Rodríguez
RE: AFG-MSA Link to Website
DATE: November 29, 2011

OVERVIEW

Since the last visit of the Middle States Association's (MSA) Validation Team (VT) in the fall of 2008, a group representing SESO's stakeholders has been monitoring SESO's Accreditation for Growth (AFG) process as identified by MSA. As you may know by now, AFG is MSA's strategic planning process that focuses on student growth through an ongoing examination of four operational objectives identified by an internal academic team in 2006.

As part of the maintenance process for accreditation, MSA now requires schools in the third year of the accreditation term to submit a Mid-Term Report of its progress made to date. Specifically, the school is asked to report the progress made in the implementation of its Plan for Growth and Improvement and toward achieving its objectives. SESO must submit a completed Report to the Middle States office no later than May 1, 2012.

It is important for you to know that the key to SESO's success is in your knowledge of the MSA-AFG process, your involvement and, your contributions. The information that follows intends to inform you about the process, its meaning, its importance, and above all your contributions to the process.



May 1, 2010

Eduardo Rodriguez
Interim School Director
Southwestern Educational Society (SES0)
P.O. Box 40
Mayaguez, PR 00681

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

On behalf of the Middle States Association, this is to notify you that, the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA), have approved the awarding of **ACCREDITATION** to:

Southwestern Educational Society (SES0)

Since you are participating in the *Accreditation for Growth (AFG)* protocol, this grant of accreditation extends for the remainder of the original **seven years**, ending on **May 1, 2016**, and includes all divisions of the school that were evaluated.

Accreditation Maintenance Requirements

In addition to the above, the school will be expected to continue to meet Middle States accreditation standards as well as to assume the following obligations:

1. The school must notify MSA prior to making any substantive changes to the objectives for which the school received accreditation.
2. The school should develop and maintain an annual review process for each of the years the school is accredited. Modifications to the action plans should be made as required to keep the AFG plan meaningful and effective. These adjustments do not need to be sent to MSA unless requested.
3. At the beginning of the third year in the accreditation term, the school will submit a Mid-Term Report in which the school provides evidence of implementing its Plan for Growth and Improvement and of progress being made toward achieving its objectives. The Report will be reviewed by the Middle States staff, which will determine whether an on-site visit must be conducted to examine any areas of concern

SESO's Mission, School wide Goals, Beliefs

School Mission

As a college preparatory school, SESO is committed to developing competent, well-rounded students in an environment that values individual intellectual achievement, strong communication skills in English and Spanish, flexible and modern teaching resources and methods, and opportunities for students, teachers, and parents to function as a community of learners.

School-wide Goals

Students develop their knowledge and abilities in a well-rounded curriculum that stresses challenging content and thought in the core areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Students develop their listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing skills at a first language level in both English and Spanish.

Students with limited proficiency in either English or Spanish develop their skills in second language programs until they have attained the level of proficiency necessary to function adequately in a first language classroom.

Students develop global awareness through interaction with persons and ideas from other cultures and participation in learning activities that stress tolerance for different attitudes and values.

Students develop habits of action that are fundamental to responsible citizenship and employment as they practice honesty, fairness, compassion, self-discipline and personal integrity in daily interactions and service to the school and community.

Students use inquiry, collaboration with others, and self-management techniques as strategies for learning and developing productive work habits.

Students develop their talents and pursue their interests in art, music, drama, athletics, and technology in order to explore, create, and express meaning and enrich their academic and personal lives.

Students maintain their physical, social, and mental well being by choosing activities and behaviors that support healthy lifestyles and relationships.

School Beliefs

Philosophy

A meaningful philosophy of education must take into account the needs and desires of those groups of people who are affected by that educational program and should reflect the whole environment the school seeks to serve. It is imperative that the community, parents, students, teachers, administration, and the Board of Directors share their vision and resources in a mutually beneficial partnership with the school.

SESO's philosophy is based upon the belief that a school should be a center for human development, which addresses the intellectual and emotional aspects of that development in a balanced and integrated fashion. The school recognizes that the student is the most important individual in the education setting. It also recognizes that the teacher is the school's greatest resource for providing a positive educational experience and a role model who will contribute to the success of the students.

SESO is committed to providing flexible instructional approaches for its students to develop to the fullest their individual capabilities and to apply these capabilities to improving the human condition. The school seeks to develop competence in those skills, which empower students to be lifelong learners. The philosophy is dedicated to the belief that information must be accompanied with encouragement of individual worth and dignity, creativity, critical thinking, and enthusiasm, if it is to be useful to students.

With the understanding that this philosophy reflects the beliefs and attitudes of the groups of SESO seeks to serve, it will be used as the basis for establishing educational objectives, programs, and policy decisions. It will remind SESO that education is an ever-present challenge toward excellence.



What is MSA/AFG?

Background - Source -MSA

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) was established in 1887 and is a nongovernmental, nonprofit, 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, Asia, and Africa.

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, including vocational-technical schools that offer non-degree-granting post-secondary programs.
- **The Commission on Elementary Schools (MSCES)** serves institutions that provide middle, elementary and early age 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 early age through grade 12 education or any combination of grade levels served by **both** the Commission on Elementary Schools and the Commission on Secondary Schools.

When a school seeks accreditation using the *AFG* protocol, it must commit to working toward establishing and maintaining a planning ethic within the school. A planning ethic means that planning for growth becomes part of what the school and its stakeholders do as much as providing programs, teaching, resources, services, and activities. A planning ethic requires continuous clarification of the school's unique mission, beliefs, profile of graduates, and student performance objectives. It requires that all of its processes are vision-driven. And it requires that the school is action-oriented by developing long-term strategic action plans that integrate programs, services, facilities, and support to address the institution's growth needs.

In the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol, the school also makes a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. The school and its community of stakeholders must demonstrate that they are never satisfied with the status quo in terms of student performance, but are striving constantly to improve that performance. The setting and striving to achieve challenging growth goals should become a dynamic process in which the school develops the flexibility to revise and modify its plans to achieve its goals based on the results received from implementing those plans. As part of the accreditation process, the school should review the results of its efforts often, but at least annually and willingly open its processes and results to review by its peers in the Middle States Association.

It is also essential for the school to commit to involving its stakeholders in meaningful ways in the setting *of* goals, developing plans to achieve and measure those goals, and the implementation of those plans. In a planning culture, the school strives to develop broad ownership of the planning process and the plan for growth and improvement by the entire community of stakeholders by ensuring broad based knowledge and understanding of and support for the goals and the plans to achieve them.

WHY AFG?

1. Systematic process to establish a vision of its future and to determine objectives for reaching that vision
2. To obtain information for educational growth and improvement, strategic planning, restructuring, and staff development
3. Examination of the entire school
4. Ensures continuity of student's experience
5. Professional development experience for staff members
6. Manage change
7. Establish priorities
8. Implement a multi-year growth and improvement plan

WHAT IT MEANS FOR SESO, PARENTS, STUDENTS, COMMUNITY

For parents and students

An accreditation by MSA gives assurance about the overall quality of a school and proves that the school system is committed to providing quality education. It requires that all involved pursue high academic standards and that SESO provides diverse course offerings, extracurricular activities, sponsors student organizations and affiliations to meet the needs of all students.

For teachers and school staff

An accreditation by MSA promotes professional growth and recognition by the educational community. It provides opportunity to be active participants in continuous school improvement and lends support to curriculum development and alignment.

For the community,

An accreditation by MSA provides an opportunity for public decision-making through involvement in the on-going accreditation process. Because of this involvement, the surrounding community may attest of the school virtues and provide information to administrators before making decisions that affect s the community.

Other reasons,

“It is very important to be part of an elite group of accredited schools, in the area we serve”.

“Accreditation brings credibility and a sense of fulfillment”. This puts our top students on equal footing with other top students in Puerto Rico and the United States”.

“It is a standard excellence recognized by educators and many institutions”.

“It is a guaranty for parents to know that the schools their children attend meet the high expectations established by the accreditation process”.

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

When the Middle States Association grants accreditation to a school, the accreditation action includes several conditions that must be met for the school to retain its accredited status throughout the term of accreditation. These conditions include the expectation that the school will:

1. Continue to meet the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.
2. Comply with all policies of the Middle States Commission that granted the accreditation.
3. Notify the Commission prior to making any substantive changes to the goals for which the school received accreditation.
4. Make a good faith effort to implement the school's improvement plan and to achieve its performance objectives.
5. Conduct at least once annually a formal review of the Plan for Growth and Improvement. Modifications to the action plans should be made as required to keep the Plan meaningful and effective. It is not necessary to notify the Commission's office of these adjustments; however, the record of reviews will be a topic of the Mid-Term Review.
6. Submit an Annual Profile updating statistical data and information about the school.
7. Pay annual membership dues and any applicable fees.
8. Nominate members of your school's professional staff who meet the qualifications for and are willing to serve on an evaluation team. Commission Policy 3.2 requires each school to release at least one staff person per year, when requested, to serve on an evaluation team.
9. During the third year of the accreditation term, submit a Mid-Term Review Report.
10. In the sixth year of your accreditation term, begin a self-study to prepare for the next team visit.

VISITORS ROLE

The Mid-Term Review Visit

If an onsite Review Visit is either required or requested, the Reviewer will seek to confirm that the evidence and data provided by the school in the its Mid-Term Review Report. In addition, the Reviewer will provide feedback and support for the school's efforts in a written report.

As a "critical friend," the Reviewer also seeks to validate, motivate, and provide assistance to the school by examining the evidence of progress. As the name *Accreditation for Growth* implies, the Reviewer looks for evidence of *growth* in the school's capacity to plan strategically and to produce the results it has set for itself in its vision and in terms of student performance. In summary, the Mid-Term Review seeks to ensure that planning in the school is a continuous process, not one that occurs once every seven years.

Finally, if appropriate, the Mid-Term Reviewer will look for evidence that any Monitoring Issues noted on the school's Official Notification of Accreditation have been addressed and resolved satisfactorily. The Mid-Term Reviewer will submit a report of the visit by adding observations, comments, and conclusions to the school's Mid-Term Review Report and submit the report to the Middle States Association. After reviewing the Report, the Middle States staff will provide a copy of the report to the school.

PARENTS ROLE

- You must keep on getting acquainted with the whole process. SESO will provide updated reports from time to time
- You must have an idea of the four operational objectives content.
- Get to know several members of the school-wide MSA planning committee
- Submit written observations, ideas and suggestions to the planning committee
- This process must not be seen as run by a small group of people, but as an institutional project and you are expected to participate in the effort. You must find how, do not wait for someone to tell you

MSA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Composition

MEMBER	STAKEHOLDER POSITION
Dr. José del Río	BOD President
Dr. Miguel Vélez	Educational Committee Chairperson
	At Large Board Member
Lourdes Lugo-López	School Director
Margarita Frontera	HS Assistant Director
Sara Acevedo	ES Assistant Director
Eduardo Rodríguez Cedeño Planning Comm. Chairperson,	Pre-School Assistant Director Operational Objective #1 Chairperson
Marisel Malavé	Operations Manager
Rosa González	School Registrar
Yolanda Parés	HS Academic Guidance Counselor
Nancy Valentín	ES Academic Guidance Counselor Operational Objective #3 Chairperson
Ma. Del Pilar Velázquez	Spanish Dept. Coordinator Operational Objective #2 Chairperson
Celia Sanders	Operational Objective #4 Chairperson HS English Teacher
Iván Romaguera	PE Department. Coordinator
Evelyn Montalvo	Science Department Coordinator
Eric Seda	Math Department Coordinator
Sephora Quintana	English Department Coordinator
Gilberto Rivera	Social Studies Department Coordinator
Valerie Vargas	Student Council President
María Alejandra Lasalle	National Honor Society President
Kassandra Méndez	Graduating Class 2011 President
Sandra Caro	Parent
Harry Sanabria	Parent

Note: 23 members as of October 2011

ACTION PLAN TEAMS CHAIRPERSONS

Action Plan/Implementation Teams 2008-2012

The table below presents the original members - as of Oct. 2008 - of the 3 operational objectives for the next five years.

Team #1 Chairperson	Team #2 Chairperson	Team #3 Chairperson	Team #4 Chairperson
Eduardo Rodríguez Cedeño Pre-school Assist. Director	Mrs. Pilar Velázquez Spansih Dept. Coordinator	Mrs. Nacy Valentín ES Academic Counselor	Mrs. Celia Sanders HS English Teacher

AFG UPDATES

Significant Dates

October 28-31, 2008	Validation Team Visit
May 2009	MSA Report (Probationary Accreditation)
June 2009	New Planning Team Committee (PTC)
July 2009	Addition of Operational Objective #4
August 2009	Modifications to Operational Objectives
September 2009	Report from MSA and PTC Workshop
Sept., Oct. Nov. 2009	PTC Monthly Meetings
December 8, 2009	Extraordinary Meeting
December 2009	Annual Report
January 2010	Review of Operational Objectives' Status
February 23, 2010	MSA Representative On-Site Visit
March 12, 2010	SESO's Case at Caribbean Advisory Committee
April 2010	SESO's Case at Middle States Association
May 2010	MSA Full Accreditation
July 2010	New School Director Appointment
Summer 2010	Dissemination of Accreditation News
August 2010	Planning Committee New Chairperson Appointment
December 2010	Annual Progress Reports
March 2011	BOD Progress Report Request
August 2011	MSA Update for School Year 2011-2012 to Faculty
September 2011	Directors Meeting with Operational Objectives Chairpersons
October 2011	Operational Objectives Chairperson's Meeting
October 2011	PTC Meeting – Report on AFG Status
November 17, 2011	PTC Chairperson report to the BOD

FUTURE CALENDAR

DATE	ACTIVITY	PLAN	OBJECTIVE
December	PTC Meeting	First Draft	Gather member's contribution to report
February	PTC Meeting	Second Draft	Gather member's contribution to report
April	PTC Meeting	Final Draft	Send Final Report to MSA

MSA POP QUIZZ

- What MSA and AFG stand for?
- Express in your own words the SESO's AFG four Operational Objectives
- When is the Mid-Term Visit taking place?
- What is the parents' role in the accreditation process?

PARENT SURVEY

ARTICLES

PARENTS COMMUNICATIONS

Alma Bello

Like many other parents, I had to leave the meeting before it ended because it was getting late for our kids. However, we are very interested in your feedback on what transpired later and specially the actions pertaining objective number four.

As parents we are anxious about the situation but at the same time will support the school's decisions and are willing to help in any way we can to obtain the accreditation come February.

Your information via email would be very much appreciated.

Thanks.

STUDENTS SURVEY

PRESS RELEASES