

Supplementary Education Centers/Programs

Accreditation Manual

Developed through the Partnership of

**Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools,
Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools**

**Western Association of Schools and Colleges,
Accrediting Commission for Schools**



2010 EDITION

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Introduction

Welcome to the accreditation process for Supplementary Education Centers/Programs. This manual has been developed to guide Supplementary Education Centers/Programs seeking regional accreditation. The manual outlines both the accrediting process (candidacy, initial visits, self-study, preparing an improvement plan, hosting a Visiting Committee) and the Self-Study Report template which includes the Seven Standards for Accreditation a Supplementary Education Center/Program must meet.

Regional Accrediting Commissions Partnership

There are six regional accrediting associations across the United States. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) has partnered with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) to develop an accreditation protocol that can be used nationwide. Currently, MSA provides accreditation services to Supplementary Education Centers/Programs in regions east of the Mississippi and WASC provides accreditation services to Supplementary Education Centers/Programs in regions west of the Mississippi.

The regional associations are non-governmental, non-profit, and peer-administered organizations. Accreditation rests on the dual concepts of self-regulation and quality improvement. Accreditation has been defined as a conformity assessment process that requires educational institutions to meet defined standards of acceptable operation and performance. Thus, accreditation refers to both a standard setting process and a review process.

Each Regional Commission is autonomous and has its own governing body that is charged with setting policy and direction as well as taking accreditation actions. These Commissions oversee accreditation for K-12 schools of all kinds, colleges, universities, junior colleges, postsecondary institutions, and Supplementary Education Centers/Programs.

Purpose of Accreditation

The accreditation process assures public trust as it reviews schools to ensure they meet rigorous, research-based education standards. The process is an engaged systemic, continuous improvement cycle that meets the expectations of parents and students by delivering all that is promised. Accreditation means that educational programs, services, staff, and facilities meet or exceed essential standards of educational quality. Accreditation provides a process for a Supplementary Education Center/Program to manage ongoing change in a way designed to consistently improve educational quality in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Establishing Candidacy for Accreditation

The following steps are to be taken to enter the accreditation process and establish candidacy* :

1. Supplementary Education Centers/Programs contact their regional accreditation organization and request accreditation materials. (Some corporate Centers/Programs may need to get permission from their governing body before pursuing accreditation).
2. Supplementary Education Centers/Programs complete an “Initial Visit Application” form, submit fees, and request an “Initial Site Visit.” This one-day visit by one or two persons establishes that the Center/Program is eligible to apply for accreditation. (The Center/Program is expected to cover expenses of the Visiting Committee).
3. After the initial visit is completed, the Regional Accrediting Agency will confirm in writing that the Center/Program is officially in “Candidacy Status” or will postpone or deny candidacy status until specified improvements are accomplished.
4. Once the Center/Program is in “Candidacy Status,” the Regional Accrediting Agency will proceed with setting the date (within one year of candidacy) for the Center/Program’s first full site visit. Materials and training will be provided as the Center/Program proceeds with completing their Self-Study in preparation for the site visit.

Self-Study Site Visit

After candidacy has been granted, each Supplementary Education Center/Program is expected to begin completing its Self-Study Report and host a Visiting Committee within one year. There is a fee for this visit and the institution will be responsible for all the hospitality costs for accommodations and food for the visit. Visits typically take one day for a one or two-person Visiting Committee.

The regional accrediting offices will work with each Center/Program to establish the date of the visit and the due dates for mailing the Self-Study Report to each Visiting Committee member. The Visiting Committee will spend the day evaluating the program, meeting with leadership, and interviewing students and parents. The Visiting Committee will go over the Self-Study Report in detail and collaborate in the identification of major areas of needed improvement for the Improvement Plan.

Terms of Accreditation

Within three weeks of the site visit, the Visiting Committee chair will file the written report with the regional office. Regional Commissions will act on the Visiting Committee’s recommendation at their next available meeting and the length of term will be communicated to the Supplementary Education Center/Program. Possible terms are determined by each Regional Commission.

All Supplementary Education Center/Programs will be required to submit annual reports that provide information on SEP profile changes, student learning progress, and actions taken on key actions identified in the School Improvement Plan (Action Plan).

*Corporate centers/programs may bypass the initial visit if the corporation is approved by WASC and MSA/CESS and the center/program is deemed ready to begin the self-study process.

Accreditation Self-Study

Self-Study Overview

The internal review and writing of each Center/Program's Self-Study Report is the critical component of the accreditation process. The Self-Study Report includes three major sections:

Section One	Checklist: Seven Standards of Accreditation
Section Two	Narrative Description of Center/Program
Section Three	Improvement Plan (Action Plan) for Future School Improvement

Each Regional Commission is prepared to assist each Center/Program in the completion of the Self-Study process. As each Center/Program proceeds with the Self-Study process, the following overarching themes are to be kept in focus:

- The clarification of the school's purpose and learner outcomes.
- The involvement of the entire learning community in the self-study process.
- The analysis of learning data and the use of data in the decision-making process.
- The acceptance of the Visiting Committee's input during the Site Visit.
- The continual use of the Center/Program's Improvement Plan to govern future growth and development.

Self-Study Report Format

Supplementary Education Centers/Programs should complete all three sections of the Self-Study Report and have evidence on hand during the site visit to back up the contents of the Self-Study Report. The pages that follow provide you with the requested information that you will need to gather to complete the Self-Study Report. A template for this report will be made available electronically.

Section One: Seven Standards Checklist

Section One consists of a checklist to ensure that the Seven Standards are being met. The Seven Standards are defined as follows:

1. Corporate Status

The corporate status of the Center/Program is clearly defined.

2. Governance and Leadership

There is a table of organization: lines of authority, relationship, and accountability are defined.

3. Educational Services

The educational mission of the Center/Program is clearly documented and supported by the staff and administration.

4. Using Performance Results

Student performance results reflect the mission and vision of the Center/Program.

5. Resources

The resources available to the Center/Programs are adequate to provide for the needs of this student population.

- **Finance:** The Center/Program is adequately financed
- **Facilities:** Educational and administrative areas are adequate for the student program
- **Technology:** The technology available to staff and student promotes educational objectives
- **Health and Safety:** A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided

6. Organizational Climate

The Center/Program's culture supports implementation of appropriate educational programs and services.

7. Improvement Planning

The Center/Program maintains long-range/strategic planning discipline which reveals how it will maintain continuous educational improvement.

1. Corporate Status

The corporate status of the Center/Program is clearly defined. There are no legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control or responsibility. Corporate linkages are expressed as enforceable agreements and the Center/Program is approved for its operations by the civil authority within whose jurisdiction is located.

All legal documents that define and describe the corporate status of the Center/Program are readily available. These include, for example, articles of incorporation, franchise agreements, proprietary registration, and partnership agreement.

Fully met Not presently met

1.2 There is a charter, license, or permit issued by the appropriate civil jurisdiction that testifies the Center/Program has the authority to operate within that jurisdiction.

Fully met Not presently met

1.3 There is access to a legal authority or counsel qualified to advise the Center/Program in its legal status, rights, and responsibilities, and in regard to other proprietary or corporate entities with which the Center/Program is in a contractual relationship.

Fully met Not presently met

1.4 Documents that define and describe any legal proceedings pending or underway are available for examination.

Fully met Not presently met

1.5 The Center/Program conducts no regular business activity that is outside the corporate or civil sanctions established by its legal status.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

2. Governance and Leadership

There is a table of organization; lines of authority, relationship, and accountability are defined. Job descriptions and work schedules are regularly reviewed. There is a plan for staff development. An up-to-date policies and procedures manual is printed and regularly reviewed.

2.1 The Center/Program has a table of organization or is able effectively to describe it in discussions.

Fully met Not presently met

2.2 Members of the staff can describe their duties with understanding, they know what is expected of them, and they know to whom they are accountable.

Fully met Not presently met

2.3 The head of the Center/Program is able to identify goals for the Center/Program's improvement and describe strategies for their attainment.

Fully met Not presently met

2.4 The activities of the Center/Program are structured, scheduled, and administered in ways that assure the stability, continuity, and reliability of events.

Fully met Not presently met

2.5 The governance and leadership appropriately recognize the accomplishments of staff and students.

Fully met Not presently met

2.6 All advertising and promotional literature is truthful and ethical and is not offensive or negative against other schools or educational agencies.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

3. Educational Services

The educational mission of the Center/Program is clearly documented and supported by the staff and administration. School curriculum is developed, organized, and based on research and best practices. Methods and materials are professionally sanctioned and instruction is offered in appropriate group sizes that encourage and permit effective instruction. Educational operations reflect no evidence of bias or prejudice.

3.1 There is a written statement of mission, philosophy, or goals which has been developed by the corporation, and is known and supported by the staff, and is available to the public.

Fully met Not presently met

3.2 Each area of learning is defined by scope and sequence. Developmental increments are identified and positive methods of motivation are defined and in use.

Fully met Not presently met

3.3 Group size allows for accommodation of individual differences and differences in learning styles and abilities.

Fully met Not presently met

3.4 Materials and methods of instruction are consistent with the mission, philosophy, and goals of the Center/Program.

Fully met Not presently met

3.5 There is evidence that no form of bias or prejudice is practiced or sanctioned by the Center/Program.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

4. Using Performance Results

Student performance results reflect the mission and vision of the Center/Program. The Supplementary Education Center/Program and/or its parent corporation systematically collects and 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, professional development, and the ability of the Center/Program to meet goals and expectations. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is systematically reported to parents and other Center/Program stakeholders, as appropriate.

4.1 The leadership and staff commit to, participate in, and share in accountability for student learning.

Fully met Not presently met

4.2 Assessment results are analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor for individual students as they move through the program.

Fully met Not presently met

4.3 Assessment results are analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor for cohorts of students as they move through the program.

Fully met Not presently met

4.4 Assessment results are analyzed with appropriate frequency and rigor for comparable national programs.

Fully met Not presently met

4.5 Records of student's learning and performance are maintained. General standards for transcript control and use, including those related to confidentiality, are known and observed.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

5. Resources

The resources available to the Center/Program are adequate to provide for the needs of this student population. The supplementary education organization has adequate resources in the areas of finance, facilities, technology, and health and safety to meet its goals and expectations.

Finances: The Center/Program is adequately financed. Finances are adequate to ensure continued stability in the operation of the Center/Program.

5.1 The Center/Program implements written financial policies and procedures that are in accordance with accepted business practices.

Fully met Not presently met

5.2 Levels of income and expenditures are in balance. Assets are sufficient to meet current and future liabilities.

Fully met Not presently met

5.3 Prior to enrolling, students and their families are informed of all financial obligations.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

Facilities: Educational and administrative areas are adequate for the student program. The facilities are safe, clean and well-maintained.

5.4 The Center/Program's facilities and equipment are safe and well maintained.

Fully met Not presently met

5.5 All physical spaces are sufficient in size to accommodate the activities conducted in the Center/Program.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

Technology: The technology available to staff and students promotes the accomplishment of educational objectives. Technology is available to both students and staff to support the educational programs offered.

5.6 Information resources, materials and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the Center/Program's pursuit of its total educational program.

Fully met Not presently met

5.7 The Center/Program implements written policies and procedures for acceptable use of technology.

- Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

Health and Safety: A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. Center/Program staff is aware of the health needs of the students and are prepared to address these needs.

5.8 The Center/Program has satisfactory written procedures and equipment with which to deal with emergencies, and to evacuate the Center/Program's facilities if necessary.

- Fully met Not presently met

5.9 Appropriate training is provided staff members on how to implement emergency and crisis plans, handle accidents and illness, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

- Fully met Not presently met

5.10 Polices regarding use/possession of tobacco, alcohol, weapons, and illegal drugs are in place.

- Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

6. Organizational Climate

The Center/Program's culture supports implementation of appropriate educational programs and services. The Center/Program's organizational structure and culture facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in its philosophy and mission. The Center/Program's culture supports successful implementation of age and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Administrative and instructional staff is qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

6.1 Administrative and instructional staffs are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the educational program.

Fully met Not presently met

6.2 Staff members are assigned to work based on their education, preparation, experience, expertise, and commitment to the Center/Program's success.

Fully met Not presently met

6.3 The Center/Program implements written policies and procedures for evaluating staff performance. Performance appraisals are conducted with the knowledge of staff members and reported in writing as well as verbally.

Fully met Not presently met

6.4 The Center/Program makes provisions for orienting and mentoring new staff members.

Fully met Not presently met

6.5 Professional satisfaction and good general morale characterize the Center/Program's staff.

Fully met Not presently met

6.6 A clearly defined, written code of student conduct supports an environment that is conducive to learning and is understood by students, staff, and families.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

7. Improvement Planning

The Center/Program maintains long-range/strategic planning activities which reveal how it will maintain continuous educational improvement. The Center/Program maintains knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment, special populations, and trends in the business environment within which the Center/Program operates. The Center/Program maintains long-range planning/ strategic planning activities which reveal how its action plans will maintain continuous improvement.

7.1 The Center/Program maintains projections that reveal trends that are underway that will affect the future of the Center/Program.

Fully met Not presently met

7.2 The Center/Program has a plan for its future that indentifies goals, needed resources, interim steps, and those responsible for accomplishment of same.

Fully met Not presently met

Comments:

Summary

Having completed the checklist above, what do you consider to be your Center/Program's most notable strengths and areas of needed improvement as it relates to the Seven Standards? Please identify at least three of each below:

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section Two: Narrative Description of Center/Program

Please provide a brief, yet clear and complete, narrative answer for each of the following questions in this section.

The Center/Program Community Profile

1. When was the Center/Program established? Date:
2. Indicate if the Center/Program is a:
 - Corporate center
 - Franchise center
3. Briefly describe the history of the Center/Program.
4. Describe the territory covered by the Center/Program and indicate the relevant economic-cultural-racial characteristics.
5. Describe the training provided to the staff that applies specifically to the Center/Program's operation.
6. Create a table according to these headings and provide information about all staff members. (Full-time equals 100%)

Name	Positions	% of Employment	Certification/license/degree
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7. Is there a criminal background check (or verification of same) on file in the Center/Program for each employee?
8. Describe how the Center/Program advertises its services.
9. What percentage of initial inquiries leads to diagnostic testing?
10. What percentage of those completing diagnostic testing enrolls in the Center/Program?
11. What percentage of those enrolling in the Center/Program completes their course of study?
12. Create a table to indicate by program areas the number of students enrolled over the past five years, including the current year. If the Center/Program has been operating less than five years, list only those years:

	Years					
Program Areas	5	4	3	2	1	Current

13. With what community, business, civic, or charitable institutions has the Center/Program joined or formed an affiliation. Describe the relationship?
14. Does the Center/Program follow-up on the students who have completed its programs? If so, how is this done, what are the results, and how is this information utilized?

After answering these questions ("Community Profile"), please identify any strengths or areas of needed improvement that you found.

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Relationships

1. How does the Center/Program report its accountability?
 Financial
 Educational
 Other
2. What do the Center/Program staff members perceive as the strengths of the Center/Program's relationship with the corporation? How are the services from the Corporation to the Center/Program evaluated?
3. Provide examples of how advisory groups have influenced the Center/Program's decisions.
4. List the educational institutions in the Center/Program's territory with which the Center/Program has a productive working relationship. Briefly describe the relationship.

<u>Center/Program</u>	<u>Relationship</u>
5. What percentage of referrals comes from other educational institutions? Describe the stability of this relationship. Is it increasing, decreasing, or stable?
6. Describe the relationship between the Center/Program and former students and their families.

7. To what professional associations or groups of educators does the Center/Program or the staff members belong?
8. Does the Center/Program offer its facilities or resources to community groups? Please describe.
9. What aspects of the relationships between the Center/Program and the community and other educational institutions are in need of improvement?
10. Does this Center/Program use a representative group of its stakeholders in an advisory basis? (informally or formally) Briefly describe.

After answering these questions ("Relationships"), please identify any strengths or areas of needed improvement that you found.

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Educational Services

1. List the educational services/programs provided by the Center/Program.
2. How does the Center/Program monitor and report learning progress?
3. How does the Center/Program provide counseling and/or advising to students and parents?
4. How does the Center/Program communicate with the schools that students attend regularly?
5. What is done to ensure that all instructional staff has full understanding and competence in the philosophy and methods of the Center/Program?
6. Briefly describe the age and condition of the instructional materials used?

7. Accreditation standards require that a complete set of records be kept on each student from admission to program completion. Cite evidence that files on each student are organized, complete, and handled with appropriate levels of confidentiality.
8. Cite evidence that a written guide of conduct and dress is written and made available to students and their families.
9. Does this Center/Program use the results of student testing to improve instruction and recognize staff performance?
10. Does this Center/Program compile student testing results to advise prospective parents of Center/Program performance?
11. Does this Center/Program make student performance results known to the broader community it serves, including other Center/Programs in its service area?
12. Briefly describe the availability of technology for staff and students attending this Center/Program.

After answering these questions (“Educational Services”), please identify any strengths or areas of needed improvement that you found.

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Organization for Student Learning

1. To what extent does the Center/Program have a clear statement of purpose that reflects the beliefs and philosophy of the institution?
2. To what extent does the governing authority adopt policies that are consistent with the school purpose and that result in student achievement of schoolwide learning goals? Can the Center/Program demonstrate academic “value added” for participating students?

3. To what extent does the Center/Program leadership focus energies of the Center/Program on student learning, empower the staff, and bring commitment of all stakeholders into the learning community?
4. To what extent does the Center/Program provide a qualified staff who are committed to student learning and the Center/Program's philosophy and mission? How is professional development aligned with identified gaps in teacher's skills and background?
5. To what extent does the Center/Program have a safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environment?
6. To what extent does the Center/Program leadership assess student learning and report progress to the school community?

After answering these questions ("Organization for Student Learning"), please identify any strengths or areas of needed improvement that you found.

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. To what extent does the Center/Program provide a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for each student?
2. To what extent does the professional staff use research-based knowledge about teaching and learning evidenced by the use of varied instructional strategies in the classroom?
3. How is student learning assessed and how is learning data used to drive Center/Program decisions and improvement planning?
4. Is learning data not only assessed, but also analyzed so that conclusions can be drawn and decisions for change made? How does the Center/Program use results to improve instruction?

After answering these questions (“Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment”), please identify any strengths or areas of needed improvement that you found.

Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needed Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section Three: Improvement Plan (Action Plan) for Future School Improvement

Supplementary Education Centers/Programs must develop an Improvement Plan (Action Plan) that becomes the blueprint for future school growth and improvement. The accreditation process focuses on self-study and the identification of specific areas of needed improvement in all parts of the school's program.

In the previous pages of the Self-Study, you have identified strengths and needed improvements. In the space below, copy and paste all of them from the document to this page. After you have collected them all on this page, then organize and synthesize them. You will find that some are similar and can be combined or blended together. Once you have synthesized your strengths and needed improvements, look more closely at your needed improvements. Which ones do you think are the most important? Identify what you consider to be your top three or four needed improvements — these will form the foundation of your Improvement Plan (Action Plan) that is the focus of this Section Three.

List the collected Strengths from the entire Self-Study Report:

List the collected Areas of Needed Improvements from the entire Self-Study Report:

After synthesizing and blending the list of Needed Improvements above, identify your final list of Needed Improvements:

From your final list of synthesized Needed Improvements, identify the top three or four that you consider to be major:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What are the anticipated impediments to achieving the Improvement Plan (Action Plan)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Attach a copy of the current Supplementary Education Center/Program Improvement Plan (Action Plan) to the Self-Study Report. See the "Resources for Developing an Improvement Plan" section of this document for further information.

Resources for Developing an Improvement Plan

Developing an Improvement Plan (or Action Plan)

Many educational institutions fail to make significant progress because they do not have a purposeful plan for growth and improvement. The Improvement Plan (sometimes called an Action Plan or Strategic Plan) is a critical part of the accreditation process.

All Center/Programs that seek accreditation must create an Improvement Plan (Action Plan) as part of the self-study process. The plan is initially based on the findings that grow out of the self-study process conducted by the Center/Program staff. The Visiting Committee then reviews the plan, and may offer suggestions and counsel, based on its findings and/or recommendations.

The following information explains the purpose of planning and provides specific directions on how to complete the plan. Regional Accrediting staff members are available to help providers develop goals and prepare the strategic plan.

Strategic Planning is:

- A process for creating an organization's preferred future
- A process which produces a results-based, action-oriented plan for self-improvement
- A process which helps an organization change in predetermined ways
- A systems approach to maneuvering over time through the uncertain waters of a changing environment, to achieve prescribed aims.

Strategic Planning Focuses on:

- Inventing the future
- Proactive leadership rather than reactive response
- Stretching for the ideal conditions rather than the settling for easily obtained everyday goals
- Optimism, creativity, group participation, management, top-down and bottom-up decision-making, relevancy, and results-based, measurable plans
- A timeline of three to five years
- Creating a written document which specifies the predetermined courses of action.

Strategic Planning Results in:

- Common purpose
- Common sense of direction
- Priorities for change
- Protection against overextending
- Goal-orientation
- Longer-term effort.

Six Key Elements in an Improvement Plan (Action Plan):

Key Element One: Goals

- Set appropriate goals that will result in significant changes in the Center/Program.
- At least one goal must deal with student performance.
- The goals should be measurable.
- Internal and external assessments should be identified.
- The goals should evolve from the self-study process.
- The goals should reflect the entity's mission, vision, and beliefs.

Key Element Two: Activities

- Clearly define major events that will occur as the goal is implemented.
- The sequence of activities should provide a logical implementation structure.

Key Element Three: Timelines

- It is important to develop a realistic timeline for each goal and its associated activities.
- Timelines can be structured as appropriate for the goal such as by month, by quarter, or by semester (fall, spring, or summer).

Key Element Four: Responsibility

- It is important to specifically identify (often by title or job responsibility as opposed to name) the individual or group responsible for goal implementation.
- Using title or job responsibility for identification assists continuance of the plan in the face of personnel changes.

Key Element Five: Resources

- Identify resources (time, personnel, equipment, funds, etc.) necessary to implement the goals. It is important to be specific regarding the sources of the resources.

Key Element Six: Monitoring/Evaluation Structures

- Identify who will monitor the progress of implementation; also identify how and when such monitoring will take place.
- Identify the assessment tool(s) to be used to monitor and specify the benchmarks expected along the way as the goal is implemented.

Suggested Format for an Improvement Plan (Action Plan)

Needed Improvement #1: <State action item in full>

Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Monitoring/Evaluation

Needed Improvement #2: <State action item in full>

Activities	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Monitoring/Evaluation