

MSA TEAM ORAL REPORT FOR GWA

Team Oral Report of the Middle States Association Visiting Team to George Washington Academy, Casablanca, Morocco – April 14, 2016

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure for all of us on the Middle States Association Visiting Team to be here with so many key members of the GWA administration and staff and the school community for this, the final official event of our team visit. We are fully aware, of course, that while our work is nearing its end, your work will be continuing on actively into your own next phase as you follow up, as in many cases you have already begun to do, on the ambitious plans you have generated collectively to bring about future improvements, major and minor, in many of the key operations and programs of the school.

As you know, the five members of our team work in four different countries and have a wide variety of experience in various positions in international education, from Europe to the Middle East to Africa and Asia, and as a result we were able to divide up the responsibilities for coverage and analysis of the various areas of the GWA Self-Study quite comfortably and effectively. Specifically, four team members (myself not included) were assigned three Standards each to concentrate on and write draft reports for, and all five of us were assigned one of the school's five Objectives for improvements and their related Action Plans. Our mandate was to explore all these areas in depth through reading and study, and more importantly, through a series of interviews and group meetings with key school personnel in each area, and to determine in each case whether the school has met, or not met, the requirements of the *Excellence by Design* protocol. Throughout this whole process, we were also working closely together as a team, and held an ongoing series of team meetings to hear reports and to listen to template write ups from each other, to give our collective input in general, and to discuss in detail any areas that seemed to be problematical or need special attention. It was a lot of work and under a tight schedule, but we managed to complete all of our tasks to our satisfaction and on time. In summary, it was a wonderful professional and personal experience for all of us, one which we would recommend highly to any and all educators as the ideal type of professional development.

For many years, this Oral Report was called the Chair's Oral Report, but the terminology was changed by Middle States several years ago and the Oral Report is now called the Team Oral Report. This was a very positive change, as the report which follows is a total team effort and

represents the consensus of the group, not just the viewpoint of the Chair.

First of all, let me say on behalf of the team that we are most appreciative of the welcome that you have given to all of us, both individually and collectively. Beginning with my initial contacts and a Skype conference with Head of School David Welling and continuing through the barrage of e-mail contacts all of us on the team have had with your intrepid Internal Coordinator, Sara Kattam, we have all been very appreciative of the exemplary way in which the school has prepared and made available well in advance the school's Self-Study and the plethora of supporting documents. We also want to thank you for the prompt and efficient manner in which you have taken care of the practical preparations for our visit both before and after we arrived and for your warm hospitality and cooperation throughout the last four days. You have a wonderful supportive atmosphere in your school community and whenever we needed help or additional information, we received what we requested promptly and with good cheer. The school staff led by Sara provided enormous help in scheduling the many meetings we needed to hold to discuss all aspects of the various standards and improvement plans. All of this made our work here so much easier and more manageable, and contributed to our being able to complete our various tasks efficiently and exactly on schedule.

To review what happens in the accreditation protocol from here on, let me give you a brief outline. Our job as a team in our work here was quite focused. We were tasked by the Middle States Association with taking the *GWA Excellence by Design* self-study and validating/verifying on site that what was reported by the school was an accurate and complete reflection of the school's programs and operations. Again and again, we as a team went back to the twelve Standards (I call them the "Twelve Olympians") that Middle States requires that all schools must meet in order to receive accreditation, with an eye to the team as a whole making a simple final determination – does the school meet each particular Standard, or does the school not meet the Standard. At the very end of this report, though I am sure all of you would prefer to hear our decision right now, we will announce what our findings were and what recommendation we will be making to Middle States regarding reaccreditation for George Washington Academy.

I am happy to state at this point that, thanks to the great hard work and efficiency of the members of our team, the official Visiting Team Report is already in at least draft form in all its sections. The final report template will be carefully reviewed and edited by me as Chair within the next two or three weeks and then be sent to your Head of School for what Middle States calls "correction of errors of fact" – not opinion – to be done by the school within a period of two weeks. After this check, I

will send the final report on to the Middle States head office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Various reviews of all related documents will be conducted by the Middle States professional staff and the final official decision on accreditation for GWA will be made at the Middle States commission meetings in the fall and announced to the school shortly thereafter.

In addition to the making the determination as to whether the school meets or does not meet the twelve Standards, the team has also compiled detailed reports on all the five Objectives in the school's improvement plans for the future. In addition, the team has offered a long list of Observations and Recommendations regarding areas that are particularly strong or that need improvement, most of which simply reinforce what you have discovered yourselves in doing the self-study documents.

Our commendations and recommendations are many and varied, and we are not able in a short oral report such as this to cover even a fraction of them. But we would like to highlight several of the most important items in each category.

First, Commendations. The team commends the school for:

- The thorough and comprehensive way in which the GWA self-study was compiled and completed in all its details with substantial participation and input from all the constituencies within the community, and the outstanding efforts of the school's Internal Coordinator in making sure that all the requirements of the accreditation protocol were fully met and documented and communicated in a timely manner to Middle States and the Middle States Visiting Team.

- Working to make sure that many of the school's improvement plans and Action Plans have been closely aligned with the school's Mission statement.

- The successful and effective refiguring and restructuring by the board and administration of the governance of the school in order to clarify roles and priorities and to facilitate major operations and planning for institutional changes and improvements in all areas.

- The innovative and creative measures the school has taken to realign and reorganize the facilities of the school to meet the needs of a steadily growing school population and school program, while at the same time always putting the needs of the students as the top priority over other needs, i.e., administration.

-The school's dedication to multilingualism as one of its highest school priorities and the special extra efforts made to compile comprehensive self-assessments of the three languages taught extensively in the school, English, French and Arabic.

-The well trained and dedicated support staff who work hard to insure that all the support services and the daily operations of the school work at maximum efficiency to support the overall program for students and teachers.

-The impressive food services that provide on a daily basis a great variety of healthy meal choices for students and faculty in an attractive area that is clean and functional.

On the other side of the ledger, Recommendations for various areas for improvement or special attention. Specifically, the team recommends that the school:

-Effectively outline the priorities for goals and objectives for improvements and establish the necessary timelines, structures and resources necessary to implement in the most comprehensive and effective way possible the five Objectives developed in the school's self-study and related Action Plans.

-Consider ways of making additional time available in the school schedule to personnel who will be taking on substantial additional responsibilities in implementing the school's very ambitious plans for improvements under the five Objectives.

-Ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum through collaboration.

-Continue mapping curriculum to develop comprehensive curriculum guides for each subject.

In closing, we would like to compliment all of you on an outstanding job in your carrying out of the accreditation protocol thus far. You have kept to the ideal of broad participation of all stakeholders in compiling the various reports, as evidenced during the numerous contacts members of the team had with teachers and staff on the various section committees. You have been open, honest and perceptive in analyzing your strengths and weaknesses, and in following up by formulating plans to address perceived needs in the various areas. We encourage you to keep advancing along the path you have already laid out, and wish you every success in your endeavors.

At this point, as Chair of the GWA visiting team, I would like to thank my fellow team members for their wonderful contributions and hard work under considerable time pressures, and for the comprehensive report we have been able to draft together. We come from very different backgrounds and have different areas of expertise and experience, but we complemented each other perfectly.

And now for the moment you have patiently been waiting for. The MSA Visiting Team for the George Washington Academy, having reviewed carefully the school's compliance with the twelve Middle States Standards, has reached the conclusion that George Washington Academy has met all twelve Standards fully. Furthermore, the school has also identified areas of student performance that are the highest priority for growth and improvement, formulated major performance objectives, and committed itself to implementing fully plans for achieving the objectives which include the school's mission and the beliefs or core values that guide its decision making. The team is, therefore, making a recommendation to Middle States for full accreditation for GWA for the period of time spelled out in the *Excellence by Design* protocol. Congratulations from all of us, and good luck to all of you and to the entire GWA community in your future efforts and endeavors.