

MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS  
COMMISSIONS ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS



# EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN

## 2021 v2

A Report of the Visiting Team for Accreditation  
by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

**The Gifft Hill School**  
**St John, USVI**

**December 3 - 6, 2024**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools is a non-governmental, nonprofit, peer-administered organization of diverse educational institutions committed to ensuring that students in accredited schools are receiving the highest quality education. For more than 125 years, MSA has provided leadership in educational quality and school improvement for its member schools in the United States and around the world. MSA seeks to ensure that accredited schools are engaged in continuous growth and improvement efforts.

The self-study process provides the framework for formally aligning all the work of the school to ensure that all of its efforts are coordinated and focused on achieving the school's mission. It is expected that the process will accomplish the following purposes:

- Development of a sense of community and common purpose among the school's students and staff, and its community of stakeholders.
- A Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and the school's capacity to produce the levels of student performance expected by the school and its community of stakeholders.
- Greater cooperation between all of the school's stakeholders in identifying and implementing practices that have been demonstrated to lead to excellence in student performance and the organization's capacity to produce the desired levels of student performance.

To be accredited, the school first must meet the 5 Standards and 23 Key Concepts for Accreditation. Second, the school, through a planning team of representatives from the school's community of stakeholders, must identify areas of student performance that are the highest priorities for growth and improvement, measurable performance objectives, and a plan for achieving the objectives. Lastly, the school's foundation documents must be used as the basis for decision-making in creating the plan for growth and improvement. After the self-study, the school goes through a peer-review process by a Visiting Team. The Middle States Visiting Team is a group of professional educators appointed by the Middle States Association to visit the school. The purpose of the Team's visit is to determine whether the school meets the 5 Standards for Accreditation and has engaged the whole school community to create relevant and achievable objectives for school improvement that align with the mission of the school.

## NOTE TO THE READERS OF THIS REPORT

Readers of this report must be aware that the report is written, in part, as the Team's response to the school's self-study. Therefore, if readers need to see the specific information and data to which this Report responds, they should read the applicable section(s) of the Self-Study Document.

## Summary of the School

<b>Head of School</b>	Ms. Liz Kinsella
<b>Internal Coordinator(s)</b>	Laura Dunlap, Veronica Woods, Emma Henson
<b>Number of Students</b>	200

<b>Grade Levels Evaluated</b>	K - 12
<b>Additional Locations/ Branch Campuses visited (if any):</b>	NA

The Pine Peace school was founded in 1978, and served preschool - K children on the island of St John in the USVI. In 2000, Coral Bay School was founded, serving 13 students in grades 7-9. Finally, in 2004, Pine Peace School and Coral Bay School merged, becoming Gifft Hill School. The school's focus was to give its students an education based on experiential activities related to the natural environment of this island including the National Park that makes up 2/3 of St John.

In 2024, the school campus includes an upper and lower school situated on a 14 acre tract of land overlooking the National Park encompassing classes for students from toddler through grade 12. This high school is the only high school on the island of St John. Students that do not choose to attend GHS, must travel by ferry each day to either public or private high schools on St. Thomas.

The dedicated faculty at the school make it a place that adults and students alike enjoy. However, island life is not for all and the cost of living causes a regular turnover of faculty that choose to leave the island or enter other careers that might offer them more financial security. GHS does all it can to retain staff and has identified staffing as one of its main goals.

The school sits on 14 lush acres near the town of Cruz Bay. There are two campuses: the upper, which houses grades 6-12, and the lower campus that houses toddlers through grade 5. These schools are located within walking distance of one another.

The lower campus is made up of several buildings including two wood frame buildings that house classrooms. These 46 year old buildings do not meet construction code and are ready to be replaced by concrete buildings which would better withstand hurricane force winds. Funding this capital project is one of the school's Middle States' goals.

The upper school is located in a "hangar" building. It is a large metal building that houses all the classrooms related to the middle and high school programs. In addition, there is an area for school assemblies and meetings. The administration has made the best use of this space for the programs it provides.

Gifft Hill School has weathered economic downturn on the island, a decreasing population, 2 category 5 hurricanes that hit one after the other and the pandemic. The Board of Trustees and the administration have worked diligently to maintain the school's student population, increasing course offerings and at the same time, maintaining a reasonable tuition rate. The school makes scholarship monies available to roughly 70% of students who cannot afford the tuition. These monies mostly come from generous patrons of the school and its programs. The school prides itself in that it welcomes students from the diversity of the island.

The upper school has a farm to table program, which includes a small culinary program. The

school's surrounding property is full of fruit bearing trees as well as several wire enclosed gardens that produce the food used in the school. The students maintain the gardens and the fence keeps out the local deer and goats. The plan for the high school is to develop similar programs for marine conservation and green energy, which might encourage island students to stay on St John after they complete their college programs.

The lower campus, which houses toddlers to grade 5, will be getting new facilities over the next few years. The administration will have to find space in the upper campus to house these programs. Through its strategic planning, the board and administration recognized the need for early childhood education and have developed a thriving program, which has a long waiting list for prospective families.

## SELF-STUDY PREPARATION

In this section of its report, the Visiting Team provides observations and recommendations regarding the school's self-study preparation based on what was seen and heard during the Team's visit to the school. The school's Self-Study and Recommendations are broken down into four components: Internal Coordinators, The Planning Team, Leadership and Governance and Implementing a Culture of Change. In the following section, please provide observations and recommendations about each of the components of the school's Self-Study and Recommendations.

### A. INTERNAL COORDINATORS

A required component of the protocol is the appointment of a team of Internal Coordinators. The primary functions of the Internal Coordinators are to:

- Coordinate the school's planning process and development of a plan for growth in student performance.
- Oversee planning and preparation for the Visiting Team.
- Prepare for the Mid-Term report.
- Provide the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to move the process forward.

The Visiting Team observed that:

- The internal coordinators were a cross-section of the school's faculty, which included two principals (upper and lower campuses), seven teachers (different grade levels and subject areas), and a counselor. The selection was made based on their individual expertise and perspectives, and their willingness to participate in the process.
- The internal coordinators provided guidance, guided discussions, and organized teams.
- The leadership provided support and assistance to the internal coordinators by providing dedicated time for meetings, access to the data, and clear guidance as to what was expected in the process.
- The internal coordinators will continue to be engaged in the implementation of the plan for growth and improvement. The team will meet regularly to review, assess, and ensure that strategies and actions are being implemented. They will monitor the data collection and analysis and make revisions or adaptations as needed based on the results of the data.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Reducing the number of internal coordinators to two persons who can provide the guidance and direction of the overall process. They should be separate and apart from the Planning Team. Currently all internal coordinators are also part of the Planning Team.

## B. THE PLANNING TEAM

A major commitment the school makes when seeking accreditation is to include a varied spectrum of the school's stakeholders, chosen by the school, in the process of continually defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing the action plans developed by these stakeholders. In summary, it is expected that the Planning Team will be given the authority, resources, and support to:

- Develop the vision for the school by creating or reaffirming a statement of mission.
- Develop a set of beliefs to serve as the ethical code for the institution.
- Develop a profile of the knowledge, skills, and qualities the institution expects of its graduates.
- Identify the areas of student performance that are the priorities for growth and improvement.
- Oversee development of the action plans to achieve the performance objectives
- Monitor implementation of the action plans.
- Conduct a periodic review of the progress being made to achieving the objectives.

The protocol requires that the Planning Team includes a varied spectrum of the school's community of stakeholders. Because Middle States' member institutions are so varied in type and situation, Middle States does not prescribe what groups constitute a school's stakeholders. This is a local decision. However, it is also important for the head of the school and at least one representative of the governing body to serve, when appropriate, on the Planning Team. In this role, the leaders should serve as "equals among equals" by serving on the Team as members with the same authority and influence as all other members of the Team. The school's leadership and the Planning Team will be expected to provide a rationale for the composition of the Planning Team.

Because the school is committing itself to developing a planning ethic and a culture of continuous improvement, the Planning Team should be institutionalized. The institution must find ways to integrate the work of the Planning Team into the culture and life of the school. In most cases, this will require a concerted effort and the willingness to examine how the institution thinks about institutional growth and improvement and who is responsible to lead it.

The Visiting Team observed that:

- The Planning Team was composed of all the internal coordinators, and the rest of the faculty and staff members. It is a small school and they felt that representation from each member was essential to the process.
- A great effort is being made to make the school more diverse in terms of representing the community of stakeholders.
- The Planning Team held monthly meetings, and conducted additional ones, as needed. Teams were created, the groups met individually and as a whole, to share information. The information presented was shared as hard copies or in digital form.



- The Planning Team will continue to meet on a monthly basis to review, assess, and make decisions based on data collected, observations, and assessments.
- As new staff comes on board, orientation will be provided to explain the re-accreditation process and share the Plan for Growth and Improvement and the implementation of the action plans and strategies.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school includes other stakeholders such as students, parents, community members, business partners and Board members as part of their Planning Team.

## C. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL'S LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The primary role of the leadership and governing body of the school—those in positions of authority and influence within the school—in the school improvement process is to serve as the “champions” for developing a planning ethic and the growth and improvement process. This critical role for leaders also applies to the heads and governing bodies of larger organizations of which the school may be a part. It is very difficult for an individual school within a larger system to plan strategically for improving student performance without the clear support and assistance of its parent organization. They, too, must “champion the cause.”

Because a major goal of the self-study and accreditation process is to ensure that the school has a vision and a plan to achieve the vision that is accepted and supported by all, leaders must communicate publicly, clearly, and often that:

- the planning process is important for the future of the school and its students; and
- they will provide the leadership, resources, and support needed to make the process and the plan successful.

The Visiting Team observed that:

- The leadership team served both as internal coordinators and members of the Planning Team.
- The leadership provided additional time for the Planning Team to conduct meetings, aside from the monthly meetings. They also provided guidance, access to data, and any other resources needed to be able to complete the self-study.
- The leadership also held meetings with the Board of Trustees and kept them informed of the process.
- The Plan for Growth and Improvement is aligned with the school's 5-Year Strategic Plan, which requires the Board's approval.
- The leadership along with the Planning Team conducted a school-wide survey, and the results utilized to identify areas of strength and challenges.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- To get more participation in the survey process, the school looks at other ways of soliciting responses.

## D. IMPLEMENTING A CULTURE OF CHANGE

A sound planning ethic is critical to achieving the school's mission, its objectives for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity, and to its capacity to effect the intended growth. While successful planning is reflective of the school's context and culture, it should be visionary in describing what the school and its stakeholder community want for their students and pragmatic in specifying the steps to reach that goal. . A planning ethic means that planning for growth and improvement becomes part of what the school and its community of stakeholders do as much as teaching, and providing programs, resources, services, and activities. A planning ethic requires continuous clarification of the community's unique Mission, Core Values, Profile of Graduates, and student and organizational performance goals. It requires that the community is action-oriented by developing and implementing long-term, strategic action plans that integrate programs, services, facilities, and support to address the school's growth objectives.

A planning ethic also requires the school to commit to involving its stakeholders in meaningful ways in the setting of objectives, developing plans to achieve and measure those objectives, and the implementation of those plans.

Therefore, an important element of the planning process is communicating with the school's staff, students, governing board, and other stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the requirements of the *Excellence by Design* protocol, the school's planning process, Foundation Documents, objectives, action plans and, eventually, its accomplishments as it implements its plan. The communication process should include means for obtaining input from the members of the school's stakeholder community and feedback regarding the products of the planning process (i.e., mission, objectives, action plans). Stakeholders cannot support and take ownership in what the school is doing unless they first know about it and are invited to join in the process.

The Visiting Team observed that:

- The goals are broken down into benchmarks of progress, and are monitored on a monthly, trimester, or annual basis by subsets of the Planning Team.
- Updates on the attainment of these benchmarks are provided to the Board of Trustees at the quarterly meetings. This process will continue as they implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement.
- The leadership ensures that the standardized assessments are administered three times a year (MAP- every trimester) to grades 3-12. The results are collected, analyzed, and used to determine the efficacy of the action plans. The responsibility and process are specific to each goal.
- Other assessments such as tests, projects, etc. are collected by the teaching staff, analyzed and the results shared with the individual students, class(es), and the school on a trimester basis.
- The school celebrates achievements through press releases, community gatherings, newsletters, meetings, thank-you notes, appreciation days, and monthly school assemblies that include parents.

- The school provides regular updates of the progress the school is making to obtain its objectives to its stakeholders through the school's website, its newsletter, annual report, letters, emails, and social media posts.
- The school provides quarterly updates to the Board of Trustees.
- The head of the school shares formal progress updates with the parent association every month.
- The Planning Team will remain actively engaged in the implementation, data collection, self-reflection, etc. It will review the progress and assess its effectiveness.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school takes advantage of the newly formed parent association as spokesperson to improve communication with all stakeholders related to the Middle States process.

## STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standards for Accreditation provide information and data that portray the school's capacity to produce the levels of student performance the school and its community of stakeholders desire and expect. This section of the self-study consists of the results of a self-assessment of the school's adherence to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation Key Concepts and Indicators of Quality.

The 5 Standards for Accreditation and 23 Key Concepts reflect research-based best practices for quality in schools. The Standards also represent the organizational "building blocks" that need to be in place to produce high levels of student performance. The self-assessment leads to identifying the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement.

The self-assessment of the Standards Key Concepts also provides those responsible for developing the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement with a good understanding of the current status of the school.

### Standards for Accreditation for Schools

- Foundations
- Governance and Organization
- Student Well-Being
- Resources
- Teaching and Learning
- Special Purpose Indicators

*Indicators for specific areas not fully addressed in the 5 Standards and may only apply to certain programs or types of schools.*

# FOUNDATIONS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

Introduction: Every effective school improvement process must begin with a clear definition of its preferred future and the understanding of the means to achieve it. MSA believes that the school's purpose and direction can best be expressed through three Foundation Documents: a Mission, a set of Core Values, and a Profile of a Graduate.

## A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> this Standard for Accreditation.
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> this Standard for Accreditation. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.

## B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
<b>Key Concept O1X</b>	
Mission Statement*	X
Core Values*	X
Profile of Graduates*	X
<b>Key Concept O2</b>	
Samples of publications/digital resources that communicate the Foundation Documents to the school's community of stakeholders	X
<b>Key Concept O3</b>	
Plan for Growth and Improvement*	X

*\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.*

## MISSION

A school's Mission should reflect the deepest desires of the school's community of stakeholders for what they want the school to become—its future in terms of what it will do for its students.

The mission expresses what the adults in the school community commit themselves to doing for the benefit of the students.

A mission statement should describe in broad and visionary terms what the school is striving to become. A mission should be outcome-based, providing clarity regarding the school's audience (whom it serves), its action (what it commits to doing for its audience), its aim (the purposes for which it exists), and its means (how, in broad terms, it will achieve its purposes).

It is not appropriate for a Visiting Team to determine whether the school's Mission is the right or wrong mission for the school or a good or bad mission. Nor is it appropriate for the Team to require changes to the Mission.

A Visiting Team will, however, offer an objective perspective regarding whether any elements of the Mission are unclear or seem inconsistent or incomplete. The Team will also try to ascertain whether the school's community of stakeholders support the Mission and are "walking the talk." It is then for the school to decide if the Team's comments are legitimate and relevant.

The school's Mission is:

Giffth Hill School offers our island community an inclusive, experiential education that sees each child as an individual and inspires each to excel. We support and challenge our students to approach complex problems resourcefully, to understand and advocate for the environment, and to honor the culture and history of Caribbean peoples. Our graduates are resilient, caring community leaders at home and abroad.

## CORE VALUES

Core Values serve as the foundation of a strong strategic plan. They are the formal expression of a school's fundamental values and serve as its ethical code. Core Values describe the moral character of a school. In a planning process involving diverse stakeholder groups, they represent the composite of the personal values held by individual planning team members.

Because core values are a matter of faith, not a matter of fact, they express the school's deepest convictions outlining what members of the school's community of stakeholders are willing to "go to the mat" defending.

Only members of the school community can identify their deeply held core values. A Visiting Team can, however, offer an objective perspective on what is unclear or seems inconsistent or incomplete in the school's Core Values. Ultimately, however, it is the school that has to decide if the Team's comments are legitimate and relevant.

The school's Core Values are:

At GHS, we believe:

- The purpose of education is to foster the skills, talents, and creativity of the individual.

- Education includes the development of critical reasoning, character, and the ability to invent and adapt in response to the surrounding environment, in addition to academic and testing success.
- Every motivated student deserves the opportunity to pursue a rigorous and meaningful education.
- Our small size allows us to honor each child's contributions and passions, and to provide the challenge and support required by each individual.
- Collaboration, cooperation, and mutual respect provide the context for learning, support, and success.
- All members of the community are responsible for leading by example in creating a sustainable school, island, and world.

## PROFILE OF GRADUATES

The Profile of Graduates provides the answer to the following question: When our students have completed our entire educational program and have had the benefit of the services and activities provided by the institution and its community:

- What do we expect them to know?
- What do we expect them to be able to do with what they know?
- What qualities or characteristics do we want them to demonstrate?

A Profile of Graduates:

- Describes the students at the point of exit from the institution.
- States the values, achievement, and readiness that each student will manifest upon graduation.
- Should be considered both as a Bill of Rights and a set of corresponding responsibilities for students, faculty, staff, administration, and the institution's community.
- Defines the outcomes each and every student will attain if the mission is operative and appropriately translated into programs and services.

A Profile of Graduates serves to:

- Translate the identity, vision, and values expressed in the beliefs and mission into statements that describe student outcomes.
- Translate and transform concepts from the ideal and global to specific expression in the development of a student in the institution.
- Give expression to what the mission means in the operational life of the institution.
- Define an outline or shape each student is expected to grow into regardless of specific courses taken or post-graduation plans.
- Provide a concrete reference point for faculty, staff, and the institution's community when designing curriculum, instructional experiences, service programs, auxiliary resources, and student and family services.

The school's Profile of Graduates is:

## PROFILE OF A GHS GRADUATE

Giffth Hill School's Profile of a Graduate reflects the strengths and values fostered by the unique educational experience offered by our island school. The profile is founded on 5 core traits that complete the sentence: A graduate of Giffth Hill School is:

- open-minded and creative
- a seeker and a problem solver
- resilient
- community-oriented
- self-aware and accountable

Each of these traits is elaborated on with specific descriptors which serve as both a road map and a mirror for students throughout their schooling.

### **OPEN-MINDED AND CREATIVE**

By graduation the student:

1. embraces and seeks out diversity in race, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic background, career aspiration, and personal identity
2. communicates thoughts and opinions confidently and listens constructively to the thoughts and opinions of others to gain new insight and perspective
3. uses tools, including fine and performing arts and technology to gain new information and insight, as well as to communicate thoughts and ideas in a compelling manner to a wider audience
4. has explored and experimented with a diverse set of course offerings and made the most of every opportunity to discover his/her talents and passions
5. is adaptable
6. seeks out new experiences and intentionally challenges self to grow

### **A SEEKER AND A PROBLEM SOLVER**

By graduation the student:

1. applies academic knowledge and skills across disciplines to recognize and seek sustainable and responsible solutions to problems of the local and global communities
2. demonstrates curiosity about the social and physical world and the motivation to seek answers for the sake of enlightenment
3. is comfortable applying academic knowledge and skills to real-life, field-based situations
4. has had experience applying knowledge and skills within a workplace setting

### **RESILIENT**

By graduation the student:

1. demonstrates grit when seeking to attain a personal goal
2. demonstrates grace and sportsmanship in response to setbacks
3. is comfortable, confident, and honest when engaging in self-assessment and reflection
4. formulates and evaluates a plan(s) that explores multiple approaches to goal attainment in response to setbacks

### **COMMUNITY-ORIENTED**

By graduation the student:

1. is confident in both leadership and taking direction

2. is committed to service at the local and global level
3. seeks to be a positively contributing member of a community
4. feels personally connected to the natural environment and acts as a steward of common natural resources

### **SELF-AWARE AND ACCOUNTABLE**

By graduation the student:

1. uses knowledge about personal strengths, weaknesses, and learning/leadership styles to increase success in a variety of settings (academic, workplace, social, etc.)
2. values and respects his/her identity as the product of cultural, historic, community and family influences as well as personal choices
3. is able to confidently navigate the challenges of daily life independently
4. demonstrates a balance of self-reliance and the ability to seek help when needed
5. knows what makes him/her happy and makes choices that lead to short and long-term happiness

## Observations and Recommendations on the School's Foundation Documents

The Team's Observations on the Foundation Documents:

- The school's **Mission, Core Values, and Profile of a Graduate** are clear, well-developed, and aligned with the school's long-term vision and educational goals.
- The Foundation Documents are actively referenced in school activities, programs, and policies, including experiential learning opportunities such as the Senior Capstone Experience, STEAM weeks, Minimesters, and GHS Gives Back Day.
- The emphasis on inclusivity, respect, and community engagement aligns with the school's stated values and preferred future.

The Team's Recommendations on the Foundation Documents:

- Regularly assess and update the Foundation Documents to ensure they remain relevant to the evolving needs of the school and its community. Include:
  - A formal schedule for reviews.
  - Broader metrics for measuring their impact on school programs and policies.
- Include in the mission some aspect of the uniqueness of the school

## C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets each Key Concept and its Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard, the Key Concepts, and the Indicators of Quality.



**Key Concept F1:**

The Foundation Documents are clearly aligned to the school's preferred future.

- The school's Mission, Core Values, and Profile of a Graduate are well-aligned with its strategic vision and reflect its aspirations for student success.
- Foundation Documents emphasize inclusivity, experiential learning, and community engagement, which are clearly reflected in school activities and policies.

**Key Concept F2:**

The Foundation Documents are reflective of the community's expectations.

- Foundation Documents incorporate cultural relevance and address the diverse needs of the school's population, particularly through initiatives such as IDEA Club and STEAM weeks.

**Key Concept F3:**

The Foundation Documents are used as a guide for decision-making.

- Foundation Documents serve as a framework for operational decisions, including the development of curricula, co-curricular programs, and facility improvements.

## Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

**Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:**

- The Foundation Documents emphasize respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion, which is evident in school-wide programs such as the IDEA Club, Heritage Day celebrations, and culturally relevant curriculum initiatives.

**Guidance for Strategic Decisions:**

- The Foundation Documents effectively guide operational and strategic planning, including curriculum development, co-curricular offerings, and resource allocation, ensuring alignment with the school's goals and values.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

### Key Concept F1: Alignment to the Preferred Future

- Ensure periodic reviews continue to include diverse stakeholders, particularly students and alumni, to maintain alignment with evolving community needs.

### Key Concept F2: Reflective of Community Expectations

- Develop strategies to make the language and objectives of the Foundation Documents more accessible and visible to students and families (e.g., posters, classroom discussions).

### Key Concept F3: Guide for Decision-Making

- Document more formalized examples of how Foundation Documents directly inform decision-making, such as their role in budget planning or staff development initiatives.
- Create a system to periodically review how well decisions align with the Foundation Documents and adjust practices as needed.

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

# GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

Introduction: A school must be clearly organized and effectively led in order to achieve its preferred future. MSA believes that school governance, leadership, faculty, and staff must work together collaboratively and cooperatively with the community to strategically plan for the school's continuous improvement. Policies and procedures detail roles and responsibilities of governance and leadership as well as the promotion of staff well-being.

## A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> this Standard for Accreditation.
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> this Standard for Accreditation. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.

## B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
<b>Key Concept O1</b>	
Appropriate authorizations for operation*	X
<b>Key Concept O2</b>	
Succession Plan*	X
Policies/Procedures relating to Governing Board roles and responsibilities and/or Bylaws for Governing Body *	X
Policies/Procedures ensuring guidelines outlining day-to-day operations of the school*	X
Organizational Chart*	X
Written Job Descriptions*	X
Documentation of regularly scheduled meetings of the governing body*	X
Documentation of governing body training/orientation	X

<b>Key Concept O3</b>	
Policies and Procedures evaluating all personnel (leadership, faculty, and staff)*	X
Performance Evaluation Instruments*	X
<b>Key Concept O4</b>	
Strategic Plans and/or Plan for Growth and Improvement*	X
Continuity of Education Plan*	X
<b>Key Concept O5</b>	
Policies/Procedures governing students services of the school (admissions, placement of students in appropriate educational levels, transfer of academic credits)*	X
Policies/Procedures defining appropriate student confidentiality and protection in communication concerning students in social media, website, photographs, newsletters, etc.*	X
Samples of Communications to stakeholder groups	X
<b>Key Concept O6</b>	
Policies/Procedures addressing student and staff code of conduct and academic integrity (including plagiarism)*	X
Policies/Procedures ensuring course and materials meet content copyright law and fair use guidelines*	X
Policies/Procedures ensuring diligence with employees, volunteers, contracted services personnel and service providers are eligible to work with children*	X
Code of Conduct or equivalent*	X
<b>Key Concept O7</b>	
Policies/Procedures to ensure the school provides a positive work environment, adequate compensation, reasonable workloads, acceptable working conditions and complaints/grievances by members of staff.	X
Salary Schedule	X
Description of Benefits	X

\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.

## C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets each Key Concept and its Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard, the Key Concepts, and the Indicators of Quality.

#### **Key Concept O1:**

The school is legally chartered, licensed, and/or authorized by the appropriate civil authorities.

- The school is in compliance with all applicable statutes, ordinances, and regulations of all civil authorities of the jurisdiction(s) and has no legal or proprietary ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility.
- The school is legally chartered, licensed, and authorized by the Virgin Islands' Department of Education.
- Self-assessment, evidence and school visit provided sufficient information.

#### **Key Concept O2:**

The school has an organizational structure clearly detailing its positions/jobs and corresponding relationships.

- The school has an organizational structure clearly detailing its positions/jobs and corresponding relationships.
- The organizational structure is such that faculty and staff clearly understand the Chain of Command.
- The Head of School and upper and lower school principals enforce the structural organization, but maintain an open door policy.
- The Board of Trustees works closely with the Head of School, but allows the Head to run the school without its interference.
- The succession plan smartly identified five key personnel where succession decisions are required.

#### **Key Concept O3:**

The school has a system in place for regularly assessing the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and all personnel.

- The school has a system in place for regularly assessing the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and all personnel.
- The Gifft Hill School Employee Performance Evaluation Handbook and the Head of School's annual goals are excellent examples of measurable performance objectives for all employees.
- The self-survey identified that the school's Board of Trustees does not have a process for evaluating its members.

**Key Concept O4:**

The school governance and leadership plan strategically for continuous school improvement.

- Strategic planning is a hallmark of the Gifft Hill School.
- The Strategic Planning Committee and the Board of Trustees of Gifft Hill School, together, have an approved 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.
- The Excellence by Design objectives, selected by the school, support the school's most recent strategic plan.
- The strategic plan is the result of input from trustees, faculty, parents, students, community leaders and friends.
- Progress reports are provided at the board's five annual meetings and 2-day offsites retreats that the board holds annually.

**Key Concept O5:**

The governance and leadership are responsible for maintaining clear, open, and appropriate communications with and among stakeholders.

- The governance and leadership maintains clear, open, and appropriate communications with and among stakeholders.
- Communication with and between school stakeholders has been an area of focus for Gifft Hill School since the last accreditation. The school created a media, marketing, and outreach coordinator position to enhance communication.
- The school updated the performance standards of all instructional employees and leadership to explicitly describe communication expectations for different positions.

**Key Concept O6:**

School governance and leadership are responsible for safety and are expected to model ethical behavior to promote a safe and orderly environment.

- School governance and leadership model ethical behavior and promote a safe and orderly environment.
- Employee conduct is governed by the policies and expectations delineated in the employee handbook, which all employees and contractors working around students sign annually.
- The school has plans to develop safeguards for vetting and orienting contractors working in proximity (although not directly) with children.
- Meetings with students, staff and faculty, as well as all the surveys provided, clearly portrayed the school as an extremely safe and orderly establishment.

**Key Concept O7:**

School policies and procedures promote a positive work climate for all personnel.

- All evidence analyzed in the self-assessment and the meetings with the teams during the school visit suggests that Gifft Hill's policies and procedures promote a positive work climate for all personnel.

- The employee handbook is thorough and extremely useful.
- The majority of the staff is new to the school (3 years or less), nonetheless, the staff has an extremely positive attitude and enthusiasm.
- The school has an active program to support all new hires, especially teachers new to the island.

## Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

- The Head of School has established an extremely positive environment full of enthusiasm, loyalty and excitement, as demonstrated by accolades from the Board of Trustees and faculty/staff/students alike.
- Gifft Hill School has clear, detailed role descriptions, which include performance standards and a reporting hierarchy for all employees.
- The school implements written policies and procedural guidelines for the day-to-day operation of the school with a focus on creating a culture where all students can grow academically and emotionally. Overwhelmingly, everyone we've met at the school, beyond just the students, agree that the school's culture promotes personal and academic growth.
- The relationship between governing bodies (the Head of School and the Board of Trustees) is one of mutual reverence and support. They are aligned very well with their 5 year strategy and the longer plan for growth.
- Strategic planning has helped this school maintain its presence on the island.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Move forward with the plan to develop a formal process to assess the Board and Head of School as indicated in the self-survey. Informally, the Board has been assessing the Head of School, however a formal process should be developed for documentation.
- Assessing the Board of Trustees performance also requires an evaluation process. The Board should develop a process, with measures, to better appraise its performance.
- The succession plan identified five key personnel where succession plans are required, however, while the plan is well laid out, the actual named/titled replacements are not identified. Finalize their plan with a list of personnel which will replace the five key school officials established as essential personnel.
- Further develop the idea of using the Barracuda Booster Club to establish a welcoming/orientation program for new families joining the Gifft Hill School.

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

# STUDENT WELL-BEING STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

Introduction: Effective learning requires a nurturing school community focused on student well-being. MSA believes the school must ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of its students. Student well-being is developed in a school culture that encourages creativity, active engagement, and collaboration with families and the community.

## A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> this Standard for Accreditation.
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> this Standard for Accreditation. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.



## B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
<b>Key Concept W1</b>	
Emergency Management Policies and Procedures*	X
Child protection policies/procedures*	X
Emergency Drill logs*	X
Evidence that Emergency Procedures are distributed appropriately*	X
Records of most recent health & safety inspections*	X
<b>Key Concept W2</b>	
Policies and Procedures relating to child protection, bullying and personal safety*	X
Policies/procedures/programs to promote awareness, prevention, and responsiveness to issues related to the social and emotional well-being of the students*	X
Confidentiality Practices/Guidelines*	X
Procedures for storage and retention of student health records*	X
<b>Key Concept W3</b>	
Policies/Procedures on Student Life & Student Activities*	X
Policies on Academic Eligibility	X
List of Student Activities Offered	X
<b>Key Concept W4</b>	
Student Code of Conduct*	X
Policies/procedures for Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism*	X

\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.

## C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets each Key Concept and its Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard, the Key Concepts, and the Indicators of Quality.

### **Key Concept W1:**

The school leadership creates and supports a safe and secure environment for all students.

- Student surveys, interviews, and other evidence provided by Giffit Hill support a safe and secure environment for students is established at the school.
- Emergency procedures are routinely documented (fire drills, tsunami drills and earthquake drills). Records provided cover from 2021 - present.
- The school does not do lock-down drills, however, they do some training for staff.
- The school has two guidance counselors (one for Lower Campus and one for Upper Campus) and two learning strategists (again one for the lower campus and one for the upper campus). All four of them meet routinely to discuss topics not only associated with the academic and social growth of each student, but also to coordinate any potential issues that may be of more concern, such as child abuse.
- The staff, currently, does not have a scheduled program of regular systematic professional training (for staff, contractors, and volunteers) on student safeguarding, child abuse prevention, identification, intervention, and reporting, conducted by trained members of the faculty or qualified external providers. However, the counselors and administrative staff do have procedures in place to handle such issues and the school's Strategic Plan does address the need to improve in this area.
- The school's intercom system (upper school only) is currently undergoing repairs. The intercom system is not loud enough for the sound to reach the entire building. The facility manager and IT specialist both have a plan in the works.
- In the lower school, there is no alarm or intercom system. Several bull horns are strategically placed to accommodate emergencies. The school has requested grant money to resolve the problem.
- The school's 5 year plan has a capital improvement project to replace wooden structures that house much of the lower school.

### **Key Concept W2:**

Student health and wellness are a main priority of school leadership.

- All GHS staff members are trained in First Aid and AED usage.
- Health education is part of the school's curriculum. The school employs one staff member whose focus is solely on health education.
- The school employs two trained counselors whose sole responsibility is to deal with students' emotional and mental well being.
- All ILPs are briefed to teachers and counselors.
- Records of allergies and other health issues are maintained with the staff.
- Students needing medication during the school day are accommodated by staff.
- The school does not have a nurse on site. However, medical personnel seem to be in short supply on the entire island.

**Key Concept W3:**

Student activities and experiences are provided for all students.

- This is an area in which Giffth Hill truly excels. Evidence and observations verified there is something for everyone at Giffth Hill. After-school clubs at both campuses, varied electives available, and multiple sports offerings provide the students with many options.
- With regards to addressing meaningful community needs, in addition to the 25 hours of community service the high school students are required to earn each year, the entire school participates in GHS Gives Back Day, in which all students volunteer with local community organizations for the day to help improve the community through meaningful service projects.

**Key Concept W4:**

Policies and procedures promote a fair and positive school climate for students.

- Results of surveys completed by the students clearly depicted a school that promotes a fair and positive school climate.
- Additionally, our meeting with students from grades 6 - 12 further corroborated that the students really love their school.
- Creating and maintaining a fair and positive school climate for all students is embedded in the foundation documents that guide the school's values and practices.
- The policies outlined in the student handbook of fairness, respect, and inclusivity, and the daily interactions between students, teachers, and staff, attest that they are at the forefront of the Giffth Hill community culture.
- This inclusive approach provides an environment where all students feel valued and respected.
- The evidence provided confirms that Giffth Hill actively promotes cultural awareness and respect through school-wide events, classroom activities, and by integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum.
- The school promotes diversity through a blind admissions policy.

## Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

- Giffth Hill School excels in promoting student well-being through respectful and supportive interactions between students, staff, and volunteers, creating a culture of trust, fairness, and mutual respect.
- Students consistently report feeling valued and supported by both faculty and administration, which fosters a positive and nurturing learning environment.
- The school's policies and activities are aligned with its Foundation Documents and are designed to cultivate strong character, integrity, and ethical behavior in all students.
- The sense of parental support and the support from the Board of Trustees all trickles down positively to the students and staff.
- The high school athletic program is financially supported by the school, which means

the extra cost of travel by boat or plane to other islands for competitions as GHS is the only high school on St John.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- In lieu of lockdown drills, perhaps the school could get the local Police Department to provide training for the faculty and staff.
- Ensure fire drills are conducted routinely, especially since they have intercom problems in the upper school, and no intercoms in the lower school.
- Immediately after drills are conducted, note issues, lessons learned, and recommended fixes in the log book.
- Maintain a personal relationship with local first responders.
- Plan for regular visits by the St. John Police Department to both campuses.

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action

NONE
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## RESOURCES STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

Introduction: In order for a school to attain its preferred future, it must have sufficient resources. MSA believes those resources include finances, facilities, transportation, food services, and technology.

### A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> this Standard for Accreditation.
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> this Standard for Accreditation. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.

### B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Operational Budget*	X
External Audit or Financial Assurances (if the school does not have a recent Audit)*	X
Proof of Insurance Coverage*	X
Policies/Procedures related to finances, financial aid, and refunds*	X
Multi-Year Financial plan (last year, current year, next year)*	X
Tuition/Fee Schedule (if applicable)*	X
School Funding Chart	X
Communications/Resources provided to families outlining their financial obligations	X
Health & Safety Inspection Reports*	X
Policies/Procedures related to facilities and maintenance*	X

Maintenance and Facilities Plan(s)*	X
Campus Description	X
Adequacy of Facilities Chart	X
Floor Plan of Facilities	X
Certificate of Occupancy (if available)	X
Technology plan, including but not limited to inventory and replacement schedule*	X
Policies & Practices regarding technology including but not limited to data protection (GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation] compliance where necessary) and acceptable use*	X
Technology Inventory	X
Professional Development Plan (related to technology)	X
Inspection and/or Safety Reports*	X
Contracts or Agreements with any outside service provider	X
Policies and/or Procedures related to Transportation and Food Services	NA
School Menus and/or Nutritional Information	NA
Staff Certifications	X

\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.

## C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets each Key Concept and its Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard, the Key Concepts, and the Indicators of Quality.

#### Key Concept R1:

Sufficient and stable financial resources are dedicated to attain the expected learning outcomes identified in the Foundation Documents.

- The majority of the school's income comes through benevolence.
- Tuition is a part of the school's income, however, in order for the school to serve the needs of the entire island, approximately 70% of students are offered financial aid to attend.
- The Board of Trustees and the administration have kept the tuition rate down so that the school can attract a diverse student body.

- A business officer handles the daily finances of the school.
- The treasurer oversees the Business Office as well as the school's endowment accounts and is the chair of the finance committee of the Board of Trustees.
- The school's advancement activities are handled by an off-island firm in Miami.
- An audit is done each year of all the school's accounting activities.
- Budgeting is handled by the Business Office, the Board of Trustees and the administration.
- There is a system of checks and balances for all expenditures.

### **Key Concept R2:**

The facilities are satisfactory or acceptable in quality and quantity to achieve the school's mission. The facilities are safe, clean, and well-maintained.

- Facilities are generally clean, safe, and well-maintained, with a proactive approach to daily upkeep supported by a full-time facilities manager and custodial staff.
- Emergency preparedness is evident through updated safety protocols, emergency exit plans, and regular fire and safety inspections.
- The upper campus offers functional spaces that adequately support the educational program at this time, while the lower campus faces challenges due to aging wooden structures, which require frequent maintenance.
- Systems for monitoring air quality, lighting, and temperature are sufficient and meet the school's operational needs.
- Drinking water availability and safety are confirmed through regular water quality testing, and ensuring compliance with health standards. Water stations are available around both schools.
- Observations during the visit revealed well-organized storage of student belongings, cleaning supplies, and sensitive records, supporting a safe and secure environment.
- Stakeholders expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of lower campus facilities, emphasizing the need for renovation or replacement plans to align with the school's mission.

### **Key Concept R3:**

Technology resources (as defined as hardware, software, platforms, policies, and procedures for the use by students and staff) support attainment of expected student outcomes.

- The school has one full-time and one part-time (24 hr on-call) IT staff.
- Each student in grades 3-12 is assigned a Chromebook.
- Students in K-2 are provided with iPads.
- Most of the equipment is 3 years old, but is "retired" every five years and replaced with new equipment.
- Students and staff have access to 3-D printers, smartboards, overhead projectors, whiteboards, etc.
- The school has a technology plan, which includes policies and practices regarding technology, including data protection.
- The school also has an Acceptable Use Policy for faculty, staff, and students.
- The school provides the funds for purchasing the technology needed. The VI Department of Education also provides some computers and technology.
- Teachers can make requests for technology resources.

- Teachers, students, and staff are provided with technological support services, and trained in the usage of new equipment.
- An asset inventory and replacement schedule are kept. The equipment is stored and tagged. Once they are handed out, the location, tag number, and user are recorded. Any damaged equipment is the responsibility of the assigned user.
- Subscription to GoGuardian ensures control and oversight of the sites students visit.

#### **Key Concept R4:**

Transportation and food services are sufficient in quality and quantity to achieve the school's mission. Transportation Services are safe, clean, and well-maintained. Food Services are well-maintained and based on nutritional standards.

- The school does not provide meals nor transportation for students. Students bring in their own lunch and snacks and transportation is provided by parents or the public school busing system.
- The school provides transportation for athletics and field trips through contractual agreements.
- The school goes to great lengths to ensure students access to athletic opportunities but it is a major budget constraint.

### Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

- The school is able to maintain a low tuition cost and robust financial aid to ensure all students who want to attend the school can.
- The school hired an advancement firm that works closely with the Board to encourage donors.
- The school has a full-time Business Officer, a Treasurer, and has outsourced fundraising to an advancement firm.
- The school's Farm to Table program provides students the opportunity to participate in a culinary learning opportunity.

### Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Once construction is completed at the lower school, focus should shift to the upper school and the need for more appropriate classroom spaces.



- Look into ways to get some financial support from the government for the costs of transporting the athletic teams to off-island competitions.

### Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

### Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

Introduction: Teaching and learning are the core of every school. MSA believes curriculum and instruction and assessment must be linked to the school's Foundation Documents, be contemporary, reflective of best practices, and supported by appropriate professional development. Student performance must be measured and appropriate student services be provided to ensure all students reach their full potential.

### A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> this Standard for Accreditation.
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> this Standard for Accreditation. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.

## B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
<b>Key Concept T1</b>	
Written curriculum guides for each component of the educational program*	X
Scope and sequence charts*	X
Program of studies or other overview of the components of the educational program	X
Master schedule	X
Policies related to educational program	X
Exemplars of student work	X
Record of professional development activities related to curriculum	X
<b>Key Concept T2</b>	
Sample Lesson Plans*	X
<b>Key Concept T3</b>	
Assessment Policies and Procedures*	X
Examples of Student Performance (Internal and/or External)*	X
Example of student transcript*	X
Example of student report card*	X
Examples of assessments	X
<b>Key Concept T4</b>	
Student Services Policies and Procedures*	X

Sample IEPs or equivalent*	X
Admissions criteria *	X
Description of guidance and counseling services available*	X
Examples of Recruiting and Marketing Materials*	X
Policies related to student services*	X
Results of follow-up studies of graduates	
<b>Key Concept T5</b>	
Professional Development Plan*	X

\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.

## C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets each Key Concept and its Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard, the Key Concepts, and the Indicators of Quality.

#### Key Concept T1:

The educational program is based on appropriate content and written curriculum aligned with generally accepted learning standards.

- Giffitt Hill School's curricula support its Mission, Core Values, and Profile of the Graduate.
- The school's curriculum consists of traditional college preparatory courses, and course offerings designed to equip students with real-life skills that prepare them for post-graduation pathways, whether they choose to pursue higher education or enter the workforce directly.
- The alignment of curriculum areas is designed to ensure a cohesive and rigorous educational experience as students progress through the grades. The school's approach emphasizes both vertical and horizontal alignment, ensuring that skills are built in a structured spiral and that learning is continuous and interconnected across grade levels. This structure ensures academic continuity and fosters a collaborative, school-wide learning environment that benefits both younger and older students alike.
- Students develop critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, and study skills across various curriculum areas, all rooted in the school's commitment to "experiential learning". Hands-on pedagogy ensures that every subject offers students opportunities to apply their knowledge in practical, real-world contexts.
- Students receive instruction in the effective use of technology across various curriculum areas, helping them develop essential digital skills for both academic success and real-world applications.

- Students are provided opportunities to develop essential social skills such as self-control, collaboration, and responsibility. Collaborative learning is built into all classes and students are routinely given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in hetero- and homogeneous based skill groupings. In addition, they teach social skills through direct instruction as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end.
- Giffitt Hill School follows a thorough and collaborative policy for selecting, evaluating, and reviewing instructional materials for all curriculum areas. The process is rooted in research-based best practices and supported by faculty professional learning communities (PLCs) to ensure materials meet the highest standards of quality and relevance.
- Instructional materials are regularly evaluated and reviewed within faculty professional learning communities. In these PLCs, teachers collaborate to assess how well materials support student learning, alignment with the curriculum, and adaptability to different learning styles and needs. This collaborative review ensures that materials not only meet academic standards but also reflect the best teaching practices and emerging trends in education.

### **Key Concept T2:**

A variety of instructional methods are used to deliver the curriculum and learning settings are developmentally appropriate for students.

- The school strives to be an inclusive learning community that works hard to adapt to various learning styles.
- Professional development sessions focus on extending teachers' understanding of divergent thinkers. A component of this training has been the Kagan method, which emphasizes collaborative learning and active student engagement. This approach is introduced to all new teachers, helping them create inclusive classrooms where students with different learning styles can thrive through group work and interactive learning techniques.
- Identifying and addressing different student learning styles is done by providing teachers professional development and a well-defined support system for students who need additional help or enrichment.
- Students with special needs, whether they be gifted, require special education, or are English language learners (ELL), are identified early on to ensure that every student receives the support they need to thrive.
- Concerns about students who are either excelling or struggling are addressed through the school's intervention, Student Support Team (SST), and Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) procedures. This structured support system ensures that appropriate interventions or personalized learning plans are put in place.
- Teachers are skilled in differentiating instruction and challenge students accordingly. Teachers modify lessons to match the student's abilities and learning style.
- Independent study options are available for students who seek further academic challenge, or wish to pursue their own interests.
- The school's small class sizes allow teachers to become familiar with each student's learning needs. Teachers are able to individualize instruction and adapt their approaches to meet the specific needs of each child.
- Teachers regularly use data from both classroom assessments and norm-referenced assessments to gain a fuller understanding of each student's strengths, weaknesses, and growth trajectories.

- There are 2 Learning Strategists, one on each campus, who work closely with the faculty to identify students' needs and to develop plans to meet those needs.

### **Key Concept T3:**

Assessment of student performance is used to measure individual and aggregate student progress and the effectiveness of the entire educational program.

- The leadership and staff at Giff Hill School are committed to and take responsibility for their students' learning and performance. The school utilizes the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, which is administered to the students three times throughout the school year.
- Assessment results are used to assess the program's effectiveness and to tailor instruction to best meet the needs of their students.
- Results are also used to make informed decisions regarding individual student performance as it gives a clear view of their individual growth and areas for improvement; this helps to determine the effectiveness of both the curriculum and the efficacy of instruction.
- In addition to MAP testing, teachers assess students in an ongoing and developmentally appropriate manner through a variety of methods such as projects, independent and guided practice, quizzes, and tests.
- Assessment results, be it standardized testing or other means of assessment, are shared with the students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders. Meetings are held with parents and other stakeholders, to explain how to interpret the MAP assessment results.

### **Key Concept T4:**

Support services are provided to assist every student in achieving academic success.

- The school provides comprehensive guidance and counseling services to support the students' personal, academic, and social-emotional development.
- There is a lower and upper campus counselor. Students may seek counseling themselves, or they can be referred by faculty members or parents.
- For students requiring additional support, the counselors collaborate with outside organizations to ensure their needs are met. In cases where social and emotional learning support is required, an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) is developed with a support team.
- The Student Support Team (SST) provides support services for students demonstrating mild to moderate learning needs. The team includes learning strategists, one at the upper and one at the lower campus, who assist students in developing academic skills, as well as counselors who support social-emotional learning.
- The Student Support Team (SST) works closely with students and their families. These goals are reviewed and adjusted seven times throughout the school year to ensure ongoing progress. Parents are kept involved throughout the entire process, maintaining clear communication to ensure alignment and support.
- Those students who require services that are beyond the school's capacity are referred to external resources better suited to provide the necessary support.
- Substance abuse prevention and awareness are addressed in the Health curriculum.

- College and career guidance is provided by the Head of School.
- There are no food services offered at the school. Students bring their own snack and lunch daily. The school offers a weekly snack to students as part of the Farm to Table/Culinary program.
- Students are transported by parents/guardians and/or the public school bus (on days when the public school is in session).
- The school offers several programs to support the orientation of new students and the transition between grade levels. At the end of each school year, fifth graders tour the Upper Campus to familiarize themselves with the environment they will enter in sixth grade.
- The school does not have a school resource officer or school nurse; however counselors do work collaboratively with the student support team in the interest of student and family assistance and every member of the faculty is certified in basic first aid and CPR.
- The St. John Rescue Service Facility and a medical clinic are directly across from the school campus.

### **Key Concept T5:**

Professional development ensures effective design and implementation of the educational program.

- The school has developed a professional development plan that ensures all staff participate in meaningful, relevant, and well-structured opportunities that enhance the educational program. The professional development plan is informed by teacher feedback and tailored to the unique needs of the school and community.
- In addition to structured professional development sessions, the school encourages its faculty to engage in professional organizations and pursue certifications that align with their individual career goals. This is supported by an evaluation and coaching process, which promotes collaborative goal-setting between faculty and school leadership.
- Giffth Hill School partially meets the indicator of quality for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development. They currently rely on informal and anecdotal data to assess the impact of their professional development initiatives. They recognize the need for more measurable metrics to fully gauge effectiveness. The school leadership will work on implementing pre- and post-professional development data collection tools. These metrics will allow better evaluation of the outcomes of the programs and ensure that initiatives are directly benefiting faculty growth and student achievement.

### **Commendations**

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

- The school has recognized the need for counselors for both the upper and lower school, and learning strategists as support.

- The small size of the school allows staff and students to develop relationships that are beneficial to the students' educational and emotional success.
- The staff is encouraged to discuss curriculum both horizontally and vertically.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Formalize the mentorship program as part of the professional development.
- Encourage staff to observe their colleagues to better understand the art of teaching.
- When using textbooks from different publishers in a subject area, make sure that the vocabulary being used is similar, especially in the area of mathematics.
- Continue to review, revise, and develop curricula for all subject areas.

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard's Key Concepts and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## SPECIAL PURPOSE INDICATORS

Introduction: The indicators below are for specific areas not fully addressed in the 5 Standards for Accreditation and may only apply to certain programs or types of schools.

Special Purpose Category	Yes	No
Online Learning	NA	
Early Childhood Education	X	
Faith-Based Schools	NA	
Located in Pennsylvania	NA	
Residential Programs	NA	

### Early Childhood Education

#### A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>MEETS</b> the Indicators of Quality for this Special Purpose Area
	It is the Visiting Team's assessment that the school <b>DOES NOT MEET</b> the Indicators of Quality for this Special Purpose Area. The evidence that supports this assessment is shown in the Recommended Stipulations shown in Section C, below.

#### B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Policies/Procedures for care of infants*	X

\* Indicates Required Evidence that the school must provide as part of the self-study process.

#### C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Observations



In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets the Indicators of Quality, and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of the Indicators of Quality.

- The Gifft Hill school provides early childhood education starting at age 2.
- The program is robust with a waiting list for children to attend.
- The program is handled by a cadre of well-prepared staff.
- The facilities that house this program will be replaced, in the near future, by more hurricane-friendly structures.
- The early childhood program begins to introduce its students to the world of language and numbers through a variety of educational methods.
- Parents expressed that they know their children are in good hands.
- Many of the children that start in the toddler program stay at the school until their high school graduation.

## Commendations

The Visiting Team commends the school for meeting or exceeding the expectations in the following ways:

- The school is commended for recognizing the need for early childhood education on the island.
- For providing well qualified staff that love their students and know how to deliver instruction in age-appropriate and meaningful ways.
- For recognizing the need to upgrade the facilities and have begun the process to make this happen.
- For holding monthly school-wide assemblies, attended by both students and their parents, to celebrate not only the children's birthdays for that month but also to celebrate the childrens' accomplishments.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of the Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- NONE

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of the Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

### Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of the Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Key Concept or Indicator	Recommended Action
	NONE	

## THE PLAN FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

The purpose of the self-study and accreditation process is first and foremost to establish whether the school meets the Standards for Accreditation, the fundamental requirement to be accredited. However, establishing that the school has in place the building blocks for a quality school is largely an exercise of looking backward to see what has been accomplished.

The *Excellence by Design* protocol is based upon the principles and concepts of strategic planning. Therefore, the protocol requires the school to be forward thinking, not focusing so much on the past and past accomplishments but, instead, focusing on the future—what does the school have to do differently or do better to further its mission and to ensure that all of its students are able to achieve the knowledge, skills, and characteristics the school has defined in its Profile of Graduates.

Therefore, the culminating activity of the self-study and accreditation process is the developing of a Plan for Growth and Improvement in Student Performance and Organizational Capacity.

Developing a Plan for Growth and Improvement involves:

- Establishing a vision for the school by creating or reaffirming a statement of mission.
- Identifying a set of beliefs that will serve as the school's ethical code.
- Developing a profile of the knowledge, skills, and qualities the school expects of its graduates.
- Identifying the areas of student performance that are the priorities for growth and improvement.
- Developing action plans to achieve the performance objectives.
- Monitoring implementation of the action plans.
- Conducting periodic reviews of the progress being made toward achievement of its objectives.

Following are the required components of the Plan for Growth and Improvement:

- A Mission
- Beliefs
- A Profile of Graduates
- Three, four, or five objectives measurable student performance/organizational capacity objectives
- One or more assessments for each objective
- Baseline data for at least one assessment for each objective
- Technical approval of the objectives
- Comprehensive action plans to achieve the objectives
- A plan for regular monitoring and review of the Plan (at least once annually)

## A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE/ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLANS

The centerpiece of the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement is formed by the three, four, or five areas of measurable objectives the school has identified as being the highest priorities for growth and improvement if the school is to move closer to achieving its Mission. While each school is unique, the main goal of educational institutions is to meet the needs of its learners. Thus, a combination of objectives, both student and organizational, is customary. Space is provided below to evaluate the maximum number of objectives. This limited number of objectives is suggested so the school can focus on the most critical aspects of student performance without diverting its energies in too many directions.

To identify these priority areas, the Planning Team asked itself:

- *What are the gaps between what we say in our Profile of Graduates regarding what we want our graduates to know, be able to do, and/or what qualities we want them to demonstrate and our students' actual performance in those areas?*
- *Which of these gaps constitute the highest priorities for narrowing if we are to move closer over the next seven years to achieving our mission?*
- *Are there areas of our organization's capacity that must be improved in order to improve our students' performance to the levels we desire and expect*

Specifying clear and measurable student performance objectives identifies the school's commitment to achieve specific end results and thus, is tied directly to accountability. The objectives must be written in such a way that they outline growth in student performance for the next seven years and represent a major focus for growth and improvement in student performance in the school. The objectives should be consistent with the mission and should extend and define the *aim* portion of the Mission in more specific detail. Objectives explicate in measurable terms the key end results that the school seeks to realize from its Mission, as expressed in its Profile of Graduates. Not only should the objectives be related to the school's Mission, but where there is also a district or system plan, the objectives should be linked to one or more of the district's or system's objectives.

The term "student performance" is intended to be defined in the broadest possible terms. The objectives submitted for accreditation may be focused on *any* of the outcomes expected of students as stated in the Profile of Graduates.

Action plans describe the methods the school will use to accomplish its Mission and its performance/capacity objectives. Action plans provide detailed descriptions of the specific actions required to achieve desired results outlined in the student performance improvement and organizational capacity objectives. This is the “doing” part of the plan. Action plans can and should include multiple activities that will engage the school in improvement activities for the next seven years. Action plans should be specific and tell in detail how the school will accomplish its objectives. Action plans should relate directly to the objectives, but they also should be related to the mission.

The Visiting Team examined the action plan(s) for the performance/capacity objectives in the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement according to the criteria for effective action plans.

## Technical Review

Prior to the Team Visit, the school's objectives were reviewed by their MSA Accreditation Liaison as to whether or not the objectives met the technical requirements of the self-study.

The Team was provided with a copy of the school's approved Technical Review.	X	YES		NO
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## Objective #1:

	This is a student performance objective
X	This is an organizational capacity objective

## A. Objective

By the year 2031, Giffit Hill School will replace vulnerable and insufficient classroom buildings, office space, and parking access with purpose-built, storm-hardened facilities that fit our current enrollment and account for potential future growth.

	YES	NO
<b>Is the objective:</b>		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	
Reflective of the school's Mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	

<b>Does the objective:</b>		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?		NA
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
<b>Does the school:</b>		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- NONE

## B. Action Plan

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

<b>Does this action plan:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Outline the action steps to be taken in year one of the accreditation term?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by taking into account the school's resources such as time, energy, personnel, etc.?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- NONE

## Objective #2:

	This is a student performance objective
X	This is an organizational capacity objective

### A. Objective

By the year 2031, Giffit Hill School will engage in a comprehensive campaign to raise money to accomplish the capital improvements detailed in objective 1 while maintaining the annual fundraising required to meet the operating budget, and growing the endowment to move the needle little by little on the fiscal sustainability of the school.

	YES	NO
<b>Is the objective:</b>		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	
Reflective of the school's Mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
<b>Does the objective:</b>		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?		NA
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
<b>Does the school:</b>		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated “No” and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- NONE

## B. Action Plan

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
Outline the action steps to be taken in year one of the accreditation term?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by taking into account the school's resources such as time, energy, personnel, etc.?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated “No” to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- NONE

## Objective #3:

	This is a student performance objective
X	This is an organizational capacity objective

## A. Objective

By the year 2031, Giffit Hill School will increase its capacity to meet the needs of all students by identifying and implementing professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff focusing on a greater understanding of working with neurodivergent students.

	YES	NO
<b>Is the objective:</b>		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	

Reflective of the school's Mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
<b>Does the objective:</b>		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?	X	
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
<b>Does the school:</b>		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- NONE

## B. Action Plan

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

<b>Does this action plan:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Outline the action steps to be taken in year one of the accreditation term?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by taking into account the school's resources such as time, energy, personnel, etc.?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- NONE



#### Objective #4:

	This is a student performance objective
X	This is an organizational capacity objective

#### A. Objective

By the year 2031, Giffit Hill School will increase teacher retention rates by identifying and implementing additional resources to support the mental health and wellness needs of teachers.

	YES	NO
<b>Is the objective:</b>		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	
Reflective of the school's Mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
<b>Does the objective:</b>		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?		NA
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
<b>Does the school:</b>		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- NONE

## B. Action Plan

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
Outline the action steps to be taken in year one of the accreditation term?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by taking into account the school's resources such as time, energy, personnel, etc.?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- NONE

## Objective #5:

X	This is a student performance objective
	This is an organizational capacity objective

## A. Objective

By the year 2031, 80% percent of Giffit Hill School students in grades K-12 will meet or exceed annual academic growth goals in mathematics as measured by MAP data collected in the fall and spring of each year.

	YES	NO
<b>Is the objective:</b>		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	
Reflective of the school's Mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
<b>Does the objective:</b>		

Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?	X	
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
<b>Does the school:</b>		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- NONE

## B. Action Plan

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

<b>Does this action plan:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Outline the action steps to be taken in year one of the accreditation term?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by taking into account the school's resources such as time, energy, personnel, etc.?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- NONE

## B. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Requirements of the Protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement

In this section, the Visiting Team reports whether the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement meets the requirements of the protocol.

Requirement of the Protocol	Met	Not Met
Three, four, or five objectives measurable student performance/organizational capacity objectives	X	
• One or more assessments for each objective	X	
• Baseline data for at least one assessment for each objective	X	
• Technical approval of the objectives	X	
Action plans for each objective that meet the requirements of the protocol	X	
Plan for regular monitoring and review of the Plan (at least once annually)	X	

## Observations

In this section, the Team lists: 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets the requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement (objectives and action plans), and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of the protocol.

- The objectives are meaningful to the longevity of the school and support the school's strategic plan.
- The objectives reflect all stakeholders' concerns and desires.
- They are ambitious.
- The Board of Trustees is working to provide the necessary resources to see these objectives through to fruition.
- The Board and the advancement consultant are working with donors to raise the funds for the capital improvement project, they have strong hopes that they will reach the objectives and financial goals.
- There is a plan to review the objectives and the action plans.
- Retention of staff is paramount to this school. The cost of living on the island is one of the main reasons for teacher turnover.

## Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Once the building project at the lower school is completed the school community should focus on updating the high school facilities to better accommodate these students and new programs that are in the works..

## Recommended Monitoring Issues

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement—Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans—that require monitoring. Monitoring issues refer to elements of Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans required by the protocol that are not completely absent but are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be corrected by mid-term in the school’s accreditation.

Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
NONE	

## Recommended Stipulations

In this section, the Team lists any requirements for the Plan for Growth and Improvement—Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans—that are absent and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
NONE	

# ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

After its visit to the school, and after considering the evidence seen and heard during the visit, the Middle States Visiting Team is charged with making a recommendation to the Middle States Commission(s) regarding the accreditation action the Commission(s) should take.

Based on the evidence presented by the school in its Self-Study Document and supporting documentation, and based on the evidence seen and heard by members of the Team from the school’s community of stakeholders, the Team recommends to the Middle States Commission(s) that it take the following accreditation action:

## ACCREDITATION

An “Accredited” institution is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. The institution agrees to adhere to the requirements for maintenance of

accreditation, and there are no outstanding issues related to the Standards or requirements of the protocol that would require monitoring or onsite visits beyond the normal expected events required by the protocol utilized.

### Recommended Monitoring Issues

Indicator No.	Requirement of the Standard	Recommended Action
	None	

### Recommended Stipulations

Indicator No.	Requirement of the Standard	Recommended Action
	None	

## NEXT STEPS

As the Giffitt Hill School proceeds with the implementation of its Plan for Growth and Improvement, there are a number of “next steps” the school will be expected to take in order to maintain accredited status. These include the following:

- Maintain Adherence to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.**  
 The five Standards for Accreditation reflect research-based best practices for quality in schools. The Standards also represent the organizational “building blocks” that need to be in place to produce high levels of student performance. An accredited school is required to maintain its adherence to the Standards for Accreditation throughout its term of accreditation.
- Implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement.**  
 When the Middle States Association grants accreditation to a school using the *Excellence by Design* protocol, it does so with the understanding that the school will make a good faith effort to implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement that served as one of the bases for accreditation.
- Submit an Annual Profile and Nominations to Serve on a Visiting Team.**  
 As a requirement to maintain its accreditation, the school is required to submit an Annual Profile in which it either confirms or revises basic data about the school. A second requirement is that the school nominates members of its staff to serve on Visiting Teams to other schools.
- Conduct Periodic Reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement.**

While Middle States does not “collect” evidence of the school’s annual review, the school is expected to conduct periodic reviews of its Plan. The purpose of the periodic reviews is to ensure that progress is being made in implementing the Plan, to update and revise the Plan as needed, and to pause to celebrate successes. The school should keep records of what transpired during each review such as meeting agendas, minutes, documented changes to the Plan, and summaries of results of the assessments being used to measure progress toward achieving the objectives. Documentation will be required for the Mid-Term Report and by the next Visiting Team.

- **Complete a Mid-Term Report.**

At the beginning of the third year in the accreditation term, the school will be required to submit a Mid-Term Report in which it will provide evidence of its 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 may determine that an on-site visit should be conducted to examine any areas of concern.

- **Prepare for Reaccreditation.**

At the beginning of the sixth year of the school’s accreditation term, begin a new self-study in preparation for the visit of the next Visiting Team. It should be noted, however, that if the school has implemented a planning ethic and the *Excellence by Design* school improvement process has been ongoing as expected, and preparing for the next team visit should be an extension of work already underway.

## SUMMARY AND CLOSURE

Today the Middle States visiting team’s work has come to its conclusion. Over the past several days, the team, which met for the first time on Tuesday, worked diligently to complete its designated work. I would like to thank Lou Cordero, Alice Sackey-Jaffurs, and Linda Sibilly for their dedication to their profession and for their willingness to give their time to help your school achieve its re-accreditation.

Over the past few days, the visiting team has met with numerous stakeholders of the school including students, board members, administrators, staff, parents, and friends of the school that work with non-profit organizations on the island. The intent of these interviews was to verify the information that the school presented in its self-study. The visiting team commends the school for its work in preparing the self-study document, which facilitated the team’s accomplishing its mission.

This oral report is an overview of the team’s findings. The team has written a report that addresses the Middle States standards as outlined in the Excellence by Design protocol. It has noted general observations that were witnessed during the visit and includes a number of recommendations that will, hopefully, help the school to improve its already outstanding programs.

At its inception, the Pine Peace School was an early childhood school. As the years passed, the school has grown to encompass a toddler program up through grade 12. In order to do this the school has continually planned strategically and thoughtfully to acquire the land and construct the facilities which have come to be known as the upper and lower schools. GHS High

School has the distinction of being the only high school on the island of St John. High School age students on the island who do not attend GHS must take the ferry to and from St Thomas to attend high school. The visiting team commends the school for finding its niche on the island and providing both very early childhood education all the way through high school graduation.

Over the past several years, the Virgin Islands have suffered tremendous losses through the downturn in some economic areas, two category 5 hurricanes, and the global pandemic. The island of St. John is still not completely back from the hurricanes but the resilience of its people has seen tourism thriving once again. At one point, Giff Hill was the only school open on the island, and students from all schools were allowed to attend. What is an aftereffect of these disasters has been the loss of students from the island as parents took their families to the mainland USA to search for work. GHS has weathered all these storms and continues to thrive in this environment.

In order to continue to serve the island community, the school prides itself on its diversity and its mission to admit students from all economic groups represented on the island. It is notable that the Board and the administration work diligently to maintain a reasonable tuition rate and to provide financial aid to meet 100% of every child's demonstrated financial need. In order to do this the Board members and administrators have to make tough choices that may have a negative effect on the tuition rate. The school is commended for dedicating additional resources to advancement and supporting the Head of School with a consultant to assist with this responsibility. GHS has been very successful in reaching its fundraising goals and is very thankful that its benefactors have confidence in the school and the professionals running it, to use their donations appropriately for the benefit of its students.

One of the main benefits of a small school setting is the climate that it fosters. The one word that the visiting team heard as the stakeholders described the school climate was "family". Students, parents, staff, administrators, and Board members all used this word to describe the relationships that have been developed within this school's community. Students especially appreciate the faculty and administration for their willingness to listen to them and to be there when they need support of any kind. The students also feel safe in this nurturing environment. The size of the school lends itself to "family" as students suggested that this is one of the main reasons for choosing to attend the school. The visiting team witnessed the very caring nature of the faculty from the toddler program all through the grades. The staff knows all the students and you can see these interactions throughout the day. You can add to this the program that sees elementary children buddying up with the children in the early childhood program, playing, reading, and generally supporting these preschool children. There are also occasions when upper school students get to interact with the students in the lower campus school.

As one of its ExBD objectives, the school recognizes the need to find some way to retain staff. Turnover of staff makes it difficult for students to develop the kinds of relationships they so eagerly spoke about. As a Middle States Chair, I have seen that hiring and retention of teachers is a problem faced by all the islands' schools. Teachers come and go for a variety of reasons, one of which is the cost of living on these Caribbean islands. The visiting team recognizes the school's need to retain staff to provide continuity to its programs. The teachers that the team interviewed all seemed to love working at this school but did discuss some of the hardships that come with moving to an expensive island. One only has to visit the island for a few days to experience the high cost of living on St. John. The Board and administration will need to come



up with some creative solutions to this problem, that will help new hirees navigate their moving to and being successful in their new island home.

Another of the school's ExBD goals is the rehabilitation of the lower campus. The Board of Trustees and staff recognize the need to replace the current wooden structures with buildings that can survive any future hurricanes. In order to accomplish this goal, the school is involved with a multi-million dollar fundraising program. The administration seems confident that this goal will be reached and that the administration working with the board and advancement consultant will see this goal through to fruition. The school has a robust strategic planning initiative that has allowed this project to be a number one priority. The visiting team commends the Board and administration for embedding strategic planning in its work to keep the school relevant in the community.

With all the great things that go on at the Giffit Hill School, the visiting team also tries to make recommendations to support what the school is doing. These recommendations are meant to be helpful to you, if the school chooses to use them. In a school of this caliber, it's hard to find areas that really need improvement but this team has made several suggestions.

As a visitor to this island, one can only describe it as idyllic. The sound of roosters crowing in the early hours, the tree frogs singing you to sleep and the ever-present vistas, make this place a paradise. However, the reality is that all these things also can make us complacent. School safety is an issue that the mainland USA struggles with. The visiting team recognizes the security that seems to be prevalent on the island but suggests that you look at ways to make the school somewhat less accessible to outsiders. This sounds like the antithesis of your mission, but one never knows what lurks outside the environs of the school.

In its discussion with the staff members, vertical articulation of curriculum was discussed. The visiting team encourages the school to make time for this to happen on a regular basis as it fosters the alignment of curriculum throughout your programs. In addition, teachers should also be encouraged, especially new hires, to observe the more seasoned veterans to better learn the art of teaching. With the proximity of the schools, the visiting team encourages these observations across all grade levels.

Each day the visiting team walked by the Farm to Table project that is handled by the students. This program, which includes a culinary and hospitality piece, is very commendable and is helping to train students who want to work in hospitality/tourism. The administration has plans to add more programs of this nature, including marine conservation and green energies, which would put students on a college and career track that meets the needs of the island community. The visiting team would recommend that initiatives like this be planned and added to the current program as they become financially feasible.

The report that the visiting team will forward to Middle States addresses all standards. As a faculty you worked through these standards while doing the school's self-study. The team has commented and made recommendations where necessary. Again we hope that you have learned from your self-analysis and that you will consider some of our suggestions.

The visiting team would like to thank all the stakeholders it encountered over the past few days. We have enjoyed our visit and have come to know the Giffit Hill School. Your work and dedication

have earned you another 7 years of accreditation, which the visiting team will recommend to Middle States.

Again we want to thank the Board members and their commitment to the school. It was a pleasure meeting with you and thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us. We also want to thank the parents who eagerly spoke of their interactions with the school and why they choose to send their children here. To the students that we met, thank you for your candor and your willingness to share both your love for your school as well as some of the things that you think could be changed. The visiting team suggests that the administration tap this resource and allow students to sit on the implementation committees that will be the next phase of the Excellence by Design protocol.

To the staff, you are the heart of the school. Without you, Giffit Hill School wouldn't exist. Your students and their parents appreciate all the work you do for them and know that it is not easy in this economic environment. Your work for Middle States re-accreditation has been exemplary and the visiting team thanks you for helping to facilitate its work. We thank you for allowing us to be a part of the school for these past few days and know that your work is greatly appreciated.

To Rachel and Heather, thank you for opening up your schools to us and for allowing us to interact with your staff and students. The visiting team leaves knowing that both schools are in good hands.

To Joanna Wheatley, we're not sure of your title but you are surely one of a kind. Thank you for being our Uber driver and our mother over the past week. We appreciate how you ferried us around and made sure we stuck to Liz's schedule.

Finally, to Liz, we want to thank you for your attention to detail and for making this visit a truly professional experience. Each of us on the team will take away new experiences both in the realm of education and in building relationships within a school. It is very obvious that you have the support from the board and from the staff which helps to make GHS so successful.

The visiting team has enjoyed its stay on St. John and hopes that all your Excellence by Design objectives will be brought to fruition.

## VISITING TEAM ROSTER

Role	Name	School/Organization
Chair of the Team	Mr. Carmine J. Antonelli	MS Ambassador
Team Member	Mr. Luis Cordero	All Saints Cathedral School
Team Member	Ms. Alice Sackey-Jaffurs	Good Hope Country Day
Team Member	Mrs. Linda Sibilly	MS Ambassador