

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**

**COMMISSION ON
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



**REPORT OF THE
ACCREDITATION FOR GROWTH
VALIDATION TEAM**

**Northern Burlington Regional County School District
Middle School and High School
Mansfield Township, New Jersey
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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 the highest quality education for students. Its purpose is to ensure the continuous improvement of its member schools through effective leadership, self-study, peer evaluation, accreditation, exemplary programs, and supportive services. For more than 75 years, the Association has provided leadership in school improvement for its member schools in six states in the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, and Africa.

Accreditation for Growth (AFG) is a unique accreditation process that uses strategic and site-based planning as vehicles for school improvement and growth in student performance. The process, developed by the Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS), Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, provides linkages between district and site planning efforts. The primary determinants of progress are actual student results rather than the input of resources. *AFG* requires the school to base its objectives on a vision of a preferred future and thus is a future-oriented process. *AFG* provides for a continuous review of programs and services and allows diverse constituent groups to participate in charting the future of the school.

The *Accreditation for Growth* process requires that the school meets CSS standards. A school site plan, developed by a planning team of representative stakeholders from the school and community, should be consistent with the vision of the district's strategic plan. It should contain the following components: mission, beliefs, two to four measurable student performance objectives, and action plans that detail activities, timelines, individuals and group responsibilities, as well as resources provided to accomplish these objectives.

In addition, a planning process should be in place that will ensure that the school has both the capacity and the will to implement its action plans. The planning process typically includes an internal coordinator responsible for monitoring the plan, procedures for communicating planning activities to the school community, provision for annual reviews of the plan, and one or more action plan teams responsible for implementing the plans.

By choosing *AFG*, Northern Burlington County Regional School District has made several commitments.

- 1) It has committed to focusing on the end result – improved student performance – as the primary priority for school improvement efforts.
- 2) It has committed to operating from a vision of where it wants and needs to go with the mission and beliefs serving as a unifying force for change.

- 3) It has committed to including a varied spectrum of stakeholders in the process of continually defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing action plans developed by these stakeholders.
- 4) It has committed to a process where progress will be continuously reviewed.
- 5) It has agreed to participate in a peer review and external validation process by accepting outside visitors.

The Middle States Validation Team is a group of professional educators appointed by the Commission on Secondary Schools to visit a school using the *Accreditation for Growth* process. The purpose of the team visit is threefold. First, the team assesses the planning processes used by the school in developing the plan; the team determines the school's adherence to planning requirements as outlined by the Commission, as well as, whether the planning processes will ensure continuous improvement and commitment. Second, the team reviews the content of the school's plan to judge the validity and clarity of the plans along with the level of commitment to implementation. Finally, it is the team's responsibility to review the school's maintenance and implementation of the CSS standards.

The five members of the Validation Team to Northern Burlington County Regional School District used the three and one-half day visit to review written documents regarding the plan and its development. The Team interacted with as many of the school's stakeholders as possible regarding their knowledge, understanding and support for the plan. The groups interviewed included the internal coordinators, the Board of Education, staff, administration, student leaders, parents, a randomly selected group of students, guidance counselors, library staff, department heads, curriculum supervisors, implementation team chairs, the Planning Team, supervisor of buildings and grounds, athletic director, student activities coordinator and club advisors. The Team concluded that they had a full and rich experience of the school, leading to the following report and assessment.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PROFILES

District Profile

The Northern Burlington County Regional School District is an important part of its growing community.

The Northern Burlington County Regional Middle School and High School are located in Mansfield Township. Its constituent elementary districts are Chesterfield, Mansfield, North Hanover, and Springfield Townships. In addition, the district serves the children of United States Air Force personnel stationed at McGuire Air Force Base.

The regional school district provides comprehensive educational programs for pupils in grades seven through twelve. Students in grades 7 and 8 are housed in a separate Middle School building located on a 53-acre parcel of land. Students in grades 9 – 12 are housed in two separate buildings located on a 146-acre parcel of land adjacent to the Middle School. The high school east building houses 9th graders and the high school west building houses grades 10 – 12.

Northern was formed in 1959 and began operation with the completion of the original building in 1960. Additions were made in 1961, 1965, 1976, and 1995. In December of 2000, a \$28 million referendum, which included the purchase of a 53-acre parcel of land adjacent to the existing school campus, was approved. In September of 2004, the construction of the new 800-student Middle School was completed. All 7th and 8th grade students are now housed in the new Middle School.

The district's education offerings include academic subjects; business subjects, including cooperative education offerings; industrial arts; a vocational agriculture program; special education classes, including resource centers; art; music; and a basic skills remedial program. The area is ripe for continued development and the future of the regional school district seems to promise continued growth and expansion.

The Northern Burlington County Regional School District is a very attractive place to live. Citizens enjoy the rural community atmosphere while living in commuting distance to Trenton and points north as well as to Philadelphia. In addition, the area is also convenient to Atlantic City and the Jersey Shore.

Chesterfield Township is in the extreme northern part of Burlington County and borders on Mercer County and is 21.61 square miles in size. The 2000 census shows the populations of the township to be 2614 persons. Chesterfield Township provides educational facilities for kindergarten through grade six at the Chesterfield Elementary School. Significant growth is anticipated in this community in the next five years.

Mansfield Township lies to the west of Chesterfield Township and is 21.72 square miles in size.

Mansfield is a growing community. The 2000 census shows the population of the township to be 5090. This is an increase of 1216 from the 3874 on record for the 1990 census and additional housing developments are being completed. Mansfield Township provides educational facilities for pre-school handicapped children ages three to five and for grades kindergarten through six. Springfield Township lies to the south of Mansfield and Chesterfield Townships and is 30.4 square miles in size. Growth in Springfield has been modest. The 2000 census shows the population of the township to be 3227 persons. This is an increase of 199 from the 3028 reported in the 1990 census. Springfield Township provides educational facilities for kindergarten through grade six at the Springfield Elementary School.

North Hanover Township lies east of Chesterfield and Springfield Townships and borders on portions of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base are adjacent to the township. The township is 17.14 square miles in size. The 2000 census shows the population of the township to be 7347. This is a decrease of 2647 from the 9994 persons identified in the 1990 census. North Hanover Township provides educational facilities for kindergarten (four and five year old pupils) through grade six at five separate schools. Four of the five schools are located on McGuire Air Force Base in a single educational campus. The fifth school is in Jacobstown, several miles from the Base.

The Northern Burlington County Regional School District continues to expand and change to reflect the needs of its growing community. School facilities are constantly improving and services to students are being assessed and revised as appropriate. For a more comprehensive review of both the Middle School and the High School academic, extra-curricular, and co-curricular programs, please carefully review each Principal's message.

High School Profile

Northern Burlington County Regional High School serves students from Chesterfield, Mansfield, North Hanover, and Springfield Townships, as well as students from McGuire Air Force Base. The diversity of the students in terms of their backgrounds and life experiences adds to the culture of the school and provides a superior foundation upon which to prepare the students for their futures. At Northern Burlington, they are proud of their rigorous academic offerings, the talented and dedicated instructional staff, and their commitment to each and every student in the Northern Burlington region. As evidenced by their mission statement, "Inspire the Desire for Continued Growth...One Kid at a Time," they take great pride in not only preparing the students to be successful in high school, but also preparing them to continue learning throughout their lives. They monitor student performance on a regular basis and go to great lengths to ensure that every student has the opportunity to seek additional help in any area in which they may struggle. They are committed to the idea that building personal relationships with students is the best way to encourage them to work to capacity and achieve both inside and outside the classroom. Northern Burlington County Regional High School currently offers a wide array of both core courses and elective offerings in many different disciplines, with additional courses under development. The English program focuses on the development of writing skills through an analysis of British and American Literature, as well as, elective offerings in Creative Writing and Journalism. In addition to the traditional World and United States History requirements, the

