

New Hope School in Maryland achieved MSA-CESS accreditation status

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In October, New Hope School received notice that it had achieved accreditation status with the Middle States Association's Committee on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS). The Middle States Association has been a worldwide leader in accreditation and school improvement for over 125 years. This award came on the foundation of a two-year self-study process and a visit from a site team last March.

According to the Association's website, "Accreditation is a self-evaluation process that schools and school systems use to demonstrate they are meeting a defined set of research-based performance standards. The standards examine schools in a holistic way, supplementing student-testing data to provide a more complete measure of a school's performance and chart a strategic and realistic course for continuous school improvement."

New Hope School began in the basement of a home in Dover in the fall of 1996. Today, the Clifton, New Jersey school comprises 47 students in grades K-8. In the spring of 2015, after almost 20 years, parents and educators decided that the time had come to apply for accreditation. Led by principal Dr. Robert Beebe, the school put together a planning team of teachers, administrators, and parents to begin its self-study, which consisted of evaluating whether the school met Middle States' Standards for Accreditation in 12 key areas. Meeting on a nearly monthly basis, the team examined its policies and activities, gathered various documentation, and conducted a survey for faculty, parents, and students to provide feedback on the school's performance.

In March, an outside team of educators from MSA-CESS accredited schools paid New Hope a visit for 4 days, sitting in on classrooms, interviewing school staff, parents, and students, examining the school's self-study report, and witnessing how the school operates both inside and outside the classroom.

Following the visit, Teresa Hadley, the chairperson of the visiting team, submitted a report to MSA-CESS which was reviewed by educators on multiple levels. Early this past October MSA's full board decided to award New Hope School its accreditation. "Such recognition comes on the foundation of countless hours of investment by our staff, both past and present, as well as our greater community of stakeholders, consisting of our students, parents, and Board of Directors," said Dr. Beebe. "Receiving MSA accreditation is a validation of the quality of our education program as well as the vibrant spirit of our overall school community."

MSA accreditation status is valid for seven years, during which time the school is expected to continue to work to improve its program, especially in the areas of reading, character education, and graduate outreach. In three years' time, the school will submit a progress report to Middle States on the status of its improvement efforts.