

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**



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

**The Banjul American Embassy School
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INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges

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

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. It was developed by the Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS), Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. 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.

There are three components to the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol:

- *Accreditation for Growth* requires that the school meets the twelve MSA Standards for Accreditation. Accreditation standards are the primary criteria used in making accreditation decisions. The standards address the quality of the school's programs and resources that provide the foundation for the outcomes in student performance.
- In addition to meeting the standards, the *AFG* protocol requires a seven-year site plan developed by a Planning Team of representative stakeholders from the school and community. The plan should contain the following components: mission, beliefs, two to four measurable student performance objectives, and action plans that detail activities, timelines, individuals/groups responsible, and resources provided to accomplish these objectives. If the school is part of a larger

organization, the school's plan should be consistent with the vision of that organization's strategic plan.

- The protocol also requires that a planning process is 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.

In 2001, a Validation Team representing the Commission on Elementary Schools visited The Banjul American Embassy School. Based on that visit, the Validation Team recommended to the Commission on Elementary Schools that the school be fully accredited for seven years. The Commission accepted that recommendation based on evidence reported by the Validation Team that the school was meeting the following commitments required by the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol:

- **A Focus on Student Performance and Growth.** The Team determined that there was a focus on student performance and school improvement efforts were aimed at student learning, student performance, and student results.
- **A Culture of Accountability in Student Performance.** The school's student performance objectives were measurable, and there was a viable internal monitoring process and an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plans was developed.
- **A Planning Ethic.** The school was engaged in a continuous clarification of its unique mission, beliefs, and expected student performance objectives. The school was action-oriented as shown by the development of long-term strategic action plans that integrated program, services, facilities, and support to address growth needs.
- **Commitment to Continuous Improvement.** The school was committed to continuous evaluation, an annual review process, peer review, and a dynamic process with the flexibility to modify action plans.
- **Involvement of Representative Constituents.** There was a climate of inclusiveness and evidence existed of the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the planning process.

Finally, the Team found evidence of a commitment by the school community to implement its plans for improving student performance over the seven years of the accreditation period.

At the mid-point of the accreditation period, a Mid-Point Reviewer representing the Commission visited the school to assess the progress the school was making toward establishing a planning ethic, implementing its plan, and achieving its student performance objectives. Based on the evidence obtained during that visit, the Reviewer recommended to the Commission that the school's accreditation be continued for the full seven-year period.

This Middle States Validation Team was a group of professional educators appointed by the Commission on Elementary Schools to visit The Banjul American Embassy School because it sought re-accreditation through the *Accreditation for Growth* process using Edition 4B for 2nd and Subsequent Use. The Validation Team's visit came at the end of the school's seven-year accreditation. The Commission on Elementary Schools asked the Validation Team to answer the following questions:

- Has the school achieved its *AFG* objectives? If not, has the school implemented faithfully its action plans to achieve its objectives, and has it adjusted the action plans based on the data received from their implementation?
- To what degree has the school developed a culture and ethic of continuous planning? To what degree has the school institutionalized its planning processes? Are the planning processes dynamic and ongoing?
- Has the school grown organizationally in its ability to organize and plan continuously for improving its students' performance?
- Does the school continue to meet the Middle States Standards for Accreditation?

First and foremost, Middle States seeks evidence of growth in areas of student performance identified in the objectives for the school. It is critical that the school has made a good faith attempt to address fully its objectives and to implement its action plans upon which the school's accreditation is based.

Besides looking for student performance growth, MSA is also expecting to see *organizational* growth. It is important that a school is able to provide evidence that, if it is not making the kind of progress it had intended on the student performance objectives, it has conducted a self-analysis to find out why and has adjusted its plans accordingly.

The “culture of planning” should cause an AFG school to develop new systems continually to ensure that the plans become a reality.

The Validation Team

The four members of the Validation Team to The Banjul American Embassy School used the three and one-half day visit to gather evidence that would enable it to answer the questions posed by the Commission. The Team examined the documentation developed by the school. The Team interacted with as many of the school’s stakeholders as possible regarding their knowledge, understanding and support for the plan and the results attained by the school. The groups interviewed included the Internal Coordinators, the Planning Team, the school board, the director, the administrative assistant/accountant, all faculty, the student council and all the remaining 5th-8th graders not in the student council, representatives of each group that worked on the MSA standards, the implementation team representative, and support staff (maintenance and security). The Team also had the opportunity to talk with the U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia who is represented at every school board meeting. The Team concluded that, based on the evidence it saw and heard during its visit, it can answer the Commission’s questions. The Team’s answers, observations, and conclusions are included in this report.

CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

The Banjul American Embassy School, or BAES (pronounced "bays") was founded in 1984 in the Republic of The Gambia, a West African country 180 miles long and 21 miles wide stretching along both sides of the River Gambia, which runs its length to the Atlantic coast.

A former British colony with English as its official language, The Gambia shows considerable French influence from Senegal, by which it is almost completely surrounded. The majority of the people are Muslim (some 85-90%). The Mandinka form the largest of The Gambia's eight indigenous ethnic groups. Wolof is the most widely spoken Gambian language. The country lies at the southern edge of the Sahel and is made up of mostly savannah and open woodland vegetation. The climate is sub-tropical, with a distinct rainy and dry season, and the river is an eco-tourism attraction because of its biodiversity.

BAES is located in a quiet, shaded, residential area of Bakau, a coastal resort area suburban to the older capital city, Banjul. The school is within walking distance from the Atlantic and from music, arts and crafts centers; ancient burial grounds; sacred pools; and a nature reserve.

The school is in its original location. It now encompasses 4 major buildings with 13 classrooms, a library, a computer laboratory, an art room, and a purpose built science laboratory. Recreational facilities include two playgrounds and a small soccer field which are difficult to keep grassed in the dry season. The school is bright, clean, and attractive but staff readily name areas that have been recently improved and others that need remodeling. At the same time that it is dealing with the increasing maintenance needs of its current rented buildings, the school board is trying to make manageable a design and fundraising ideas for building a new facility further southwest on this same peninsula in Brusubi on a walled property donated to the school.

BAES has been accredited with MSA since 1991, and most recently using AFG in 2001. The Team understands that the reason for delaying the re-accreditation process for one year was related to the change in school heads for the 2007-2008 school year. BAES's web site, www.baes.gm, presents a PreK-8th grade school with an enrollment of about 80 students in four sections: the early childhood center (PreK), which currently has the most enrollment; the elementary school (K-Grade 5), the middle school (Grades 6-8) and potentially a secondary program operated through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's

Independent Study High School. Currently BAES has no enrollment above the 8th grade. There are five full time American, Canadian, British, and Belgian-trained teachers, and three others who are part time. The language of instruction is English; French is taught at all grade levels.

Class sizes vary from five to eighteen students and class configurations depend on the year's enrollments. Multi-grade classes may span two sections of the school; for example, during 2008-2009 there is a 5th-6th grade class. BAES's web site states that their multi-age and multi-grade classes put children into natural learning environments and helps teachers to individualize the instruction for every child.

When asked during the self-study Period of Reflection in what significant and important ways the school had changed in the last five years, BAES answered with this list:

- Technology enhancements include: wireless access to the internet, increased bandwidth, more computers and laptops purchased for the computer lab
- Purchase of new student desks, chairs and tables in most classrooms; additional air-conditioners; proper teacher desks
- New reading series and supplemental reading material ordered
- New math series for grades 5-8 in place
- Realigning and working on curriculum standards in process for core subjects; continue curriculum revision with attention to standards and benchmarks
- Curriculum maps for grades K-8 and specials in place
- Terminated GS4 Security contract and hired school security staff
- Eliminate nursery class and combine PK1 and PK2

The school was then asked what external and internal events and trends are affecting and will affect the school's ability to achieve excellence in student performance, and how should, or will, the school respond and attend to these events and trends. BAES answered, "There are no particular external events that affect student performance. A trend that affects the school is the regular turnover of staff and the financial ability to hire experienced teachers and limited numbers from abroad. The staff is working on completing the curriculum revision and put it in place along with a curriculum cycle. This will provide the necessary guidance for new staff. Budget limitations can manage one core subject each year."

Income to sustain the school is largely derived from enrollment. BAES has concerns about whether projected enrollment will support hiring the number of overseas-trained teachers it needs and also going ahead with construction of a new school in Brusubi. There is some immediacy about the need to begin construction, as there is a

requirement that the land which has been donated to the school must be developed within ten years, or the school will lose it. In the spring of 2008 school board/parent/staff sessions with a marketing strategist from the U.S. Embassy resulted in a *Strategic Marketing and Implementation Work Program for BAES for Year 2009* which the school has not yet had time to review. Through interviews the Team learned that the current facility has in the past accommodated more than 100 students. Although there seems to be an emerging trend of Gambians abroad returning to The Gambia who potentially require what BAES offers, BAES faces enrollment challenges. Because The Gambia has enjoyed relative stability since it became independent in 1965, BAES gained temporary surges of enrollment when civil strife caused draw-downs of enrollment in international schools in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire but with peace in those countries this trend has reversed. The closure of the USAID office in The Gambia in 1994 also affected BAES's enrollment.

In looking at demographic trends, the self-study did not include parents' source of employment (UN or humanitarian agency, religious mission, government agency, host or third country business, and so on) or the percent of parents whose fees are paid, or partially paid by the parents' employer. The Team was told that a number of countries assign foreign relations with The Gambia to their diplomatic representations in Dakar, so these diplomatic missions do not exist as sources of enrollment in the Gambia. 25% of current student enrollment is British; the Team learned that Britain has just determined that The Gambia will no longer be classified as a family post because of the quality of medical care available in the country, but if a number of BAES British families are paying fees privately the school would be less affected by this decision.

The school worries that the global economic downturn and unfavorable exchange rates will affect agencies' ability to continue sending their children to BAES. The school has competition for enrollment in the Marina School, which is perceived by some as being British and has lower fees. A newer international school also provides alternatives for enrollment. BAES has, however, had intake from families dissatisfied with these schools. The Team recommends the school analyze what attracts families who choose BAES among other local alternatives, see whether these differences are reflected in BAES's publications and mission and belief statements. The school states that the most common means by which people find out about the school and apply is by the internet. The school's web site states that "BAES is the only school in The Gambia with an internationally accepted certificate of accreditation. . ." Other areas of strength such as ongoing staff development or its truly international staff are not mentioned in its statements or on its web site. The Team heard it expressed that students leaving BAES do well in other educational systems they move on to, but this is also not mentioned in the web site. The web site is handsome and full of information but needs updating to

say what potential parents need to know to make their choices, and to reflect what is actually going on in the school.

In the self-study, BAES checked the "satisfactory" box in rating BAES's school climate (III.D), and gave no explanation. The Team differs with this view; it saw great teaching going on at BAES. Without exception among the teachers, there was enthusiasm for and eagerness to get working with the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) which is to be used for Objective #1. Teachers are committed, dedicated to their work, and take pride in the outcome of their efforts. The Team asked the student council what they liked most about the school, and they answered that in this school everyone is family, everyone is your friend, there is love and caring around you, you won't be ignored in a corner if you are not feeling good, and everyone talks to everyone. The Team asked random 5th-8th graders what they understood by the term *global responsibility*, which appears in BAES's mission and belief statement, and they responded that it means being aware of and caring about others and what is going on around you--not just yourself. The Team asked what's special about what they learn here, and were told that at BAES you learn the important things--you try to sort out conflicts in other parts of the world, and learn from the varied international experiences of both the students and the teachers, because they come from all over, too.

As one of the Team members told the students, "Many schools aspire to this kind of school and never get there: hold tight to this valuable place and nurture it!"

THE PERIOD OF REFLECTION

Because the school already accredited using the *AFG* protocol should be well on its way toward developing a culture of planning strategically based on a shared vision for the school's future, it is not expected that the school will stop what it has been doing for the last four years and begin anew. Instead, it is expected that the school's planning to improve student performance in specified areas will be an extension of the school's efforts over the last four to five years. It is the desire of the Middle States Association that planning for re-accreditation be as seamless as possible with the school's previous and ongoing work to improve student performance.

Regardless of the school's success with institutionalizing strategic planning, it will be expected to have in place the capacity, the will, and the systemic structures to implement its plan. In summary, the school that plans effectively has planning "in its blood." Therefore, the school should be demonstrating the following "attitudes"—planning, vision, continuous improvement, and involvement. Because the school should have been developing these "attitudes" during the first period of accreditation using *AFG*, the planning document prepared for the Validation Team should include evidence of these "attitudes," and the Validation Team expected to see and hear that these attitudes are alive and well in the school during its visit.

However, even schools that have had success in developing a culture of planning that is now part of what the school does on a day-to-day basis should be able to identify its successes and the areas in need of improvement.

At the beginning of its self-study for re-accreditation using the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol for 2nd and Subsequent Use, a group representing the school's stakeholders that has been given responsibility for overseeing and monitoring implementation of the *AFG* plan paused for a Period of Reflection. The purposes of the Period of Reflection are:

- to assess the degree to which the school has met or is meeting the commitments made when it was accredited using the *AFG* protocol. These commitments relate to the school's planning processes, the content of its plan, and the response to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation;
- to confirm the foundational elements of the *AFG* plan—the mission and beliefs;
- to determine what areas of student performance should be the focus of its objectives for the next seven year; and
- to confirm, revise, or develop new action plans to achieve those objectives.

Based on review of the school's planning document, interviews with the Internal Coordinator, the director, and representatives of the Planning Team, the Validation Team reports the following information regarding the Period of Reflection for the Banjul American Embassy School. The two performance objectives that the school has been focusing on during the previous period of accreditation are writing skills and judgment and responsibility.

BAES has been administering a variety of standardized assessments, and a self designed Writing Portfolio Rubric over the past seven years as partial means to measure the achievement of the performance objectives. Action steps have been carried out through various activities. The objectives were revised to more accurately reflect more realistic goals. The revised objectives were approved by MSA in December of 2004.

The Internal Coordinator communicated that only ten students now enrolled have remained at BAES for the duration of the accreditation period, limiting the interpretation of data. It appears that the ten students have all made improvements in both writing and their choices in judgment and responsibility, although thorough written analysis and documentation of this data is not present. In the school's Summary of the Period of Appraisal, it is also indicated that students who have attended for two to three consecutive years have demonstrated growth in both objective areas. The raw data indicating student scores for each assessment has been provided in the Summary of the Period of Appraisal. However, any type of interpretation of the data is nonexistent. The Team notes that the *Report of the AFG Mid-Point Reviewer* from two years ago noted that, "Missing from the process is a formal procedure for review and interpretation of assessment scores, and for recording of the trends shown (if any) and decisions made."

The action plans are reported by the Planning Team and Internal Coordinator to have been completed. The only evidence of completion of activities listed in the action plan is in the form of photos with captions. Without evidence of review, analysis or written documentation, the pictures and raw data of assessments provide only basic evidence of accomplishment of these original objectives.

The Planning Team and Internal Coordinators report that annual reviews took place during a meeting at the end of each academic year and during the orientation period of each new academic year. As communicated in the Summary of the Period of Appraisal,

during these periods of reflection and planning, progress of the action plans were noted and compared to the timelines and adjustments were made as appropriate. Even after the recommendations of the *Report of the AFG Mid-Point Reviewer*, there continues to be no written accounts of these sessions, although updated action plans and written communication with MSA indicated in the mid-point review would suggest that a process of review and modification had taken place.

The school provided photos of several events that were submitted as the records of celebratory events and activities. The pictures were grouped into folders with titles that named the event taking place.

Since the completion of the previous re-accreditation process, there have been two new administrators, including the current director. The Planning Team members, consisting of a variety of stakeholders, such as teachers, board members, students, and parents, have all changed, except for one teacher who has been the Internal Coordinator.

Reflection on the Analysis of the Reflection Rubric

Based on the answers provided in the planning document and in interviews with the Internal Coordinators and representatives from the Planning Team, the school states that it has experienced the greatest amounts of growth in its communication to stakeholders, the revised mission statement and beliefs, that are now viewed to be in line with the school vision, the continual work of curriculum revision and the implementation of a curriculum review cycle.

BAES states that its strengths are the availability of professional development, student/teacher ratio, increases in U.S. grant assistance, and the U.S. Embassy's support of the school. While notable accomplishments, these items do not form part of the Summary of Appraisal Rubric.

The overall areas of improvement communicated by the planning document and interviews with Planning Team representatives, include the need for a more formal, consistent description and understanding of the role and authority of the Internal Coordinator particularly as this role spans changes in school administration. This uncertainty is described as contributing to many of the difficulties in producing evidence for the events and actions of the period of appraisal. The Planning Team and Internal Coordinators indicate the lack of documentation and quality of the annual review process as areas for improvement. They also communicate that the data

management process needs to include more stakeholders and a continuing analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on the data must take place.

Reflection on the Planning Process

The Team repeatedly heard from the planning document and through interviews with the Internal Coordinator and the Planning Team that the planning process has remained the same but the change of members in the Planning Team (which became the Implementation Team following the last determination of re-accreditation) has taken place frequently. Only one member of the original Team remains today. This member is the Internal Coordinator, who has held that role throughout the process. The Internal Coordinator stated that during periods of transition in leadership, her role and authority as the Internal Coordinator had been unclear and undefined. As indicated by the response in the planning document, the Internal Coordinator has assumed the role of keeping records and communicating with teachers about assessments and annual review deadlines.

Reflection on Student Performance Objectives

BAES established two student performance objectives as part of their previous period of accreditation. The two objectives were:

Objective #1- Writing Skills- By the year 2008, 75%of BAES students, *Kindergarten-Grade 8*, will demonstrate improved writing skills as demonstrated by:

- a) *An average of .25 stanine points increase annually in 75% of the students in the KIDS standardized test scores.*
- b) *An average of 105 points annual improvement in 75% of the students in the WrAP standardized test scores.*
- c) *An average of .20 points annual increase in 75% of the students on the BAES Writing Portfolio Rubric.*

Objective #2- Judgment and Responsibility- By the year 2008, 75% of all returning BAES students, *Kindergarten-Grade 8* will demonstrate an increased capacity to exercise judgment and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics, and social justice, as measured by:

- a) *75% of students will show a 5-point increase per year in the standard score in the strength quotient of the Behavior and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS)*

b) Judgment and Responsibility Rubric

- Students scoring 2.5 or higher will maintain or improve their scores each year
- Students scoring 2.0-2.49 will increase their scores by 0.1 points each year
- Students scoring below 2.0 will increase their scores by 0.2 points each year

*Baseline: 2000

KIDS assessment and the WrAP

NOTE: text in italics indicate accepted changes to the original objectives

BAES has been administering ERB's Writing Assessment Program (WrAP), the Judgment and Responsibility Assessment (J & R), the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS), the Missouri Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills (KIDS) and a self-designed Writing Portfolio Rubric over the past seven years as a means to measure the achievement of the performance objectives.

The planning document and interviews with the Internal Coordinator indicate that the data was collected and analyzed by the previous director, but there is no written record of this analysis, and no evidence that the data was analyzed by other members of the school, used to drive instruction, or communicated to stakeholders. The Team has been provided with only the raw data and does not have any interpretation of the results or trends.

The planning document, the Internal Coordinator, the teachers and the director all report that both objectives have been met successfully.

Reflection on Action Plans

The planning document, the Internal Coordinator, representatives of the Planning Team, and the director, indicate that all items in the action plans for both objectives have been completed. They have evidenced many of the events with captioned pictures as the only evidence of completion. The planning document lists the following action steps that have been added: publish an annual yearbook, develop language arts curriculum maps, and adopt a new reading series.

Reflection on Continuing and Annual Reviews

The planning document, director, Internal Coordinator, and representatives from the Planning Team all communicate that reviews of the mission statement, belief statements and specifically the action plans take place at the end of each academic year. In addition, the action plans are also reviewed during teacher orientation at the beginning of the new academic year. Evidence for both improved student performance and celebratory events and activities are limited to only photographs with brief captions naming the event pictured and the raw data from the assessments.

The Validation Team's Observations and Conclusions

The Validation Team has no doubt that the Period of Reflection was carried out in a meaningful way that has both benefited those involved as well as the development and improvement of the school. The Period of Reflection has been greatly limited by the lack of written documentation of the events and processes being reflected upon making it difficult for the process to fulfill the complete reflective benefits it offers. A strength that has developed through this process is the renewed realization of the importance and relevance of keeping up with documentation of events and planning processes. The Team is confident that as the new Planning Team moves forward, the learning that has taken place will be evident. The following are some specific observations and suggestions:

- The manner in which some of the appraisal questions in section B.2 were answered did not address the questions. Questions that stated "using the rubric,..." were answered with responses that were unrelated to the B.1 indicators.
- The areas needing improvement in B.2 does not mention any of the three items in the rubric that were self assessed as having limited or no evidence in B.1.
- The lack of proper documentation for the events referenced makes validation of their completion very difficult, if not impossible. Events of celebration and completed action steps must be documented beyond photographs to be presented as evidence of completion.
- Data must be analyzed and that analysis must be properly documented, shared with stakeholders and used to drive instruction. There is no evidence available of data interpretation and analysis.

- The Team supports the renewed sense of necessity for more events of celebration related to the objectives and action plans.

The Team commends the school for maintaining as Internal Coordinator a faculty member that has been in place throughout the process. The school is also to be commended for its renewed sense of planning and improvement. The current staff and administration are poised to develop a documented planning process that will result in continual improvement.

CONTENT OF THE PLAN

For its first period of accreditation using *Accreditation for Growth*, the school prepared a plan to improve student performance, of which there were four required components: mission, beliefs, 2-4 measurable student performance objectives, and action plans. The expectation was that this plan would become a “living and breathing document” as the components of the plan were implemented and lived out in the life of the school. It was also expected that parts of the plan would change over time as the school implemented its action plans and then, based on the results of that implementation, made changes to the actions. However, it was not expected that the objectives themselves would change without the approval of the Middle States staff.

For the purposes of re-accreditation, it is expected that most schools that have realized some success in the student performance objectives will not create a wholly new strategic plan. Instead, using the results of the Period of Reflection, the plan will be revised for the next seven-year period of accreditation.

Mission

A school’s mission should reflect the school community members’ deepest desires for what they want the school to become. As those desires are realized or changed, the mission should change accordingly.

A mission statement should describe in broad and visionary terms what the school is and is striving to become. It should be outcome-based, providing clarity on the school’s audience (whom it serves), its action (what it does), its aim (the purpose for which it exists), and its function (how, in broad terms, it will do it).

As a result of the Period of Reflection, the school’s stakeholders concluded that the school’s mission, approved by the school board in 2005, was no longer appropriate for describing adequately what the school is and what it desires to become. The school therefore adopted a new mission statement.

The current mission of The Banjul American Embassy School, approved by the School board in December, 2008, states:

The Banjul American Embassy School is an international community providing a quality accredited American style education for students. In partnership with parents, we aim to inspire students to become enthusiastic lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity, and global responsibility.

This mission statement gives *students* as its audience, *providing and inspiring* as its action, *to inspire students to become enthusiastic lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity, and global responsibility* as its aim, *an international community* as its identity, and *a quality accredited American style education, in partnership with parents* as its means.

The Team felt that this mission statement expresses the school's vision. The group remaining that worked on the mission statement--a teacher, a parent and a student--felt that the previous statement did not express who BAES was or where it was trying to go, and they are satisfied that the current one does. The Validation Team believes the current statement's more precise, measurable terms will make the mission easier for BAES to explain to new members of the community, helping to build and maintain constituent support as well as differentiate BAES from other schools in the area. Although there is some redundancy in saying "in partnership with parents" since the current statement gives its identity is "an international community," saying so emphasizes what the school values, and the previous statement did not give an identity at all.

When asked what the term "accredited" might mean to parents applying from other educational systems, the group said it felt parents understood it promised the educational level would be a little higher, that the school was doing what it was supposed to be doing, that it was accountable. A student said it meant that the school had "passed a test." The group had thought carefully in adopting the term "American style education" as opposed to the term "American curriculum," which it had rejected.

The current mission statement differs from the previous statement in emphasizing character values. The Team commends the Planning Team for linking Objective #2 of the Plan for Growth and Improvement to the school's mission. In aligning the three character traits mentioned in the mission with the objective, the school is implementing a system to assess its own effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and belief statements.

Both "global responsibility" in the mission and "group responsibility" in the beliefs imply social action, and BAES seems to be increasing the pace of its social action activities: some past activities were raising funds to donate treated mosquito nets, donating school furniture to a partner school upcountry, and a Helping Hands project.

The Team asked what "lifelong learning" looked like, and was told by a parent that it was children eagerly searching for information, engaged in finding out and reading it for themselves. A student, asked if students ever are challenged with task-based or project-based assessment, enthusiastically described a current group task to sort out and assemble the components of the Iraqi war as "complex and fun."

The Team suggests rewording the mission statement to improve the wording; the first sentence is in the third person and the second sentence in the first person, creating an awkward change in point of view.

Beliefs

Belief statements 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. Beliefs 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 belief statements are a matter of faith, not a matter of fact, they express the school's overriding convictions, its inviolate commitments. They outline what members of the school community are willing to "go to the mat" defending. Because beliefs identify the "line in the sand," they can be used as a lens through which to examine the worthiness of the school's potential decisions or future actions.

As a result of the Period of Reflection, the school's stakeholders concluded that the school's beliefs were no longer appropriate for describing adequately what the school is and what it desires to become. The school therefore adopted revised beliefs.

The beliefs of The Banjul American Embassy School are expressed in this statement adopted in May, 2008:

We Believe Every Child

- *Is a valued unique individual*
- *Is entitled to a safe learning environment*
- *Deserves the opportunity to achieve their full potential*
- *Must be prepared to contribute to the ever changing global world*

We Believe

- *Parental involvement is vital to the success of the child and school community*
- *Individual rights must be balanced with group responsibilities*
- *Global values must be respected and promoted*

These beliefs seem to represent the fundamental values and ethical code of the school. The discipline policy and code of conduct in the policy manual seem aligned with these beliefs. Parental involvement is mentioned in both the mission and belief statements. Although the Team was told that repeated efforts to revive the Parent Teachers Association have not worked, parents served on committees during the self study; a parent teaches music from 1st-8th grades; and parent volunteers work in the newly renovated library. The Team was impressed with the high priority the school places on parent involvement and commends the school's continuing efforts to engage parents in the educational program.

The Team asked students what global values are--what a global kid is--and were told it is someone who is aware of and cares about others and what is going on around you--not just yourself. The students felt this is a general attitude of students in the school.

When asked what they liked best about the school, every child in a group of 5th-8th graders stressed the caring, family atmosphere, and mentioned how unique this characteristic was among the schools they knew about or had attended before. The previous belief statements contained the phrase "is entitled to a safe, caring, secure, and healthy school environment," but the current one reduced these adjectives to "safe." The Team suggests the school consider including the students' most salient impression of the school in one of its statements.

The Team suggests rewording the first section of the Belief Statement to improve the grammaticality of "We believe every child . . . deserves the opportunity to achieve *their* full potential."

The Validation Team commends the school's displaying its current mission and belief statements on the notice board at the gate, in the *BAES Buzz* newsletter, in the school brochure, and prominently in rooms of the school. It supports the school's expressed need for updating other publications to display the current statements such as on the school's web site or in the policy manual. BAES does not yet have a DOAS on Middle States' Association's web site.

Profile of Graduates

The Profile of Graduates is a school-developed document that describes the students at the point of exit from the school in terms of values, achievement, and readiness. A well-

written Profile will translate the identity, vision, and values expressed in the beliefs and mission into statements that describe student outcomes.

The school's newly developed Profile of Graduates is the following.

Graduates of the Banjul American Embassy School are a product of its mission and beliefs as they enter the world beyond grade 8.

Academic

- *Demonstrate logic, independence, creativity and higher order thinking skills.*
- *Passion for learning and intellectual curiosity*
- *Knowledge of core academics, technology and the scientific process.*

Social

- *Demonstrate individual responsibility*
- *Effective communication*
- *A positive self-image and values others*
- *Respect for differences*
- *Compassion and integrity*

Citizenship

- *Demonstrate and appreciate of diversity*
- *A responsibility towards a community*
- *An understanding of the changes in our global society*

Since BAES has no high school, it does not graduate students, and this was the school's first attempt at developing a profile of a student graduate. The Validation Team suggests the school reword the profile to improve its grammaticality ("demonstrate and appreciate of diversity") and make the structure more parallel, which will improve its clarity.

The Team did not find evidence that this profile had been approved by the school board. The AFG requirement to develop such a profile was mentioned in the first meeting of the Planning Team in April, 2008, but was not in subsequent minutes.

The Team finds that the concepts expressed in the profile are those generally assumed to be associated with an American style education, and tie in with the BAES mission and belief statements.

Objectives

The *Accreditation for Growth* protocol requires schools to have two, three, or four measurable student performance objectives. These objectives form the heart of the school's plan to improve student performance.

During the Period of Reflection at the end of the seven-year accreditation period, the Planning Team must determine if the school's student performance objectives have been achieved. If they have been achieved and the target performances for the objectives have been attained, the Planning Team can either adopt two to four new objectives or, if the original objectives continue to represent the school's community's priorities for student performance, continue with the same objectives with higher (or the same) performance targets for the next seven years. The Team may decide to use a combination of these options if some but not all of the objectives have been achieved. The critical question to be determined is: What areas of student performance are most critical for the school at this time if the school is to achieve its mission? If the critical areas of student performance have not changed, then it makes sense to continue with the same objectives. On the other hand, if the critical areas have changed, new objectives should be developed to reflect those areas.

During the Period of Reflection, the Planning Team concluded that the school's student performance objectives were no longer appropriate priorities. The school felt in order to meet the needs of the students in the area of academics, they needed to help students better understand what they were reading. The administration and teachers based their decision on feedback from observations and from the SRI Assessment. Therefore, the school adopted Objective #1:

By the year 2016, students at BAES grades Kindergarten to grade 8 will demonstrate improved reading skills as measured by:

- a) An annual increase in at least 100 Lexile is recorded by the graded reading scheme. (Reading Scheme (scheme to be determined) (grades K-8 in 2009/10)*
- b) An increase in reading levels during each academic year as measured by Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) (K-8). Baseline data will be available following February and May 2009 testing.*

The results from the SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) were a major factor in deciding the content of Objective #1. Another factor was from classroom observations of students reading aloud without problems but demonstrating a lack of understanding by

being unable to write about what they had read. When the teachers discussed this amongst themselves, they found that it was a common thread that went throughout the school. Therefore, the results of the SRI will be observed to measure growth in the area of reading comprehension. The SRI also generates a Lexile score. The Lexile score indicates the level of reading at which a student can read comfortably. When the MAP is administered, BAES will have another fund of baseline scores in reading for various areas of reading such as literal comprehension, inferential/interpretive comprehension, literary response and analysis, etc. The baseline data will continue to follow the student and therefore give a picture of the progress of the student. This is part of the data provided by MAP. The data provided by MAP will also give the teacher the benchmarks the students are developing and the benchmarks that he/she will encounter next to meet the next level. The scores are presented as "RIT" scores. The school will need to determine what the baseline RIT will be.

In discussion with the teachers, administrators, parents and students, The Team felt that the school had included all the school community in this decision. As indicated in the mission statement, the school aspires that its students become life-long learners and that all students deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. The Team concurs with the faculty that good reading skills and the appreciation for literature of all kinds is essential towards meeting that part of the BAES mission statement.

As mentioned above, the Objective #1 has wide-school support. The Team suggests that the school approach this objective with a view of continuity, so it will continue to be a priority over the years; to do so BAES will need to refine this objective as they find that the students are becoming more efficient readers. Success in the future will depend upon the school's involvement of the total school community in the outcomes that will demonstrate that the students possess good reading skills and use reading for both knowledge and for information. This is a reasonable and achievable objective for the school and the MAP will help the school to attain the goal.

The school's commitment to the objective has been demonstrated by their willingness to send teachers to a workshop in order to implement the MAP Program. Each time the Team asked the teachers and administrator about using MAP, there is a very noted enthusiasm for the program. The teachers are anxiously awaiting the opportunity for their students to take the tests, receive the results, and plan their strategies for helping the students.

It is important that the school uses other assessment tools as well. They have already indicated that they will continue to use the SRI and obtain a Lexile Score. The Team asked one of the students who served on the Planning Team if she knew her Lexile

score, which she quickly provided. Student awareness is a step forward towards achieving the school's reading goal. The school also will need to continue to plan units in a way that reflect understanding and critical thinking. Such unit plans as are found in the Understanding by Design model should be used to support the findings on the MAP. It was noted that the teachers want to use reading comprehension as part of a total program that will include writing. They believe that the combination of reading and writing skills will strengthen the students' ability to be successful. A writing rubric such as found in 6+1 Traits Writing Program is useful when all teachers are on board and talking the same language from Kindergarten to grade 8.

The objective must be very clear in what they want to achieve. While baselines are desirable, there are many kinds of data that the teachers will need to collect especially since younger children are learning reading in a different way from students in the upper grades. The administration needs to make sure that the objective is kept in mind when filling in the action plan. The assessments should be measuring the desired outcomes. After speaking with the Planning Team at BAES, it was noted that the baseline being used would be supplemented with the RIT scores from the MAP. The Team feels that this is a better picture of how students are progressing rather than just relying on the Lexile scores.

The Team views Objective #1 as very appropriate considering the fact that the school has recognized using both formal and informal assessments that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. The objective is reasonable and is aligned with the school's mission statement. Objective #1 is also achievable; however, The Team recommends that the school examine the assessments to make sure that they will give the results desired. The Team believes that the assessments being used will provide valid baseline as long as several assessments are being used.

Objective #2

The Planning Team explained that this objective was chosen for two reasons. They believe that it was a requirement of Middle States to present both an academic objective and a behavioral objective. They also recognized that this would enable them to develop an objective reflective of BAES' mission statement, "to inspire students to become enthusiastic lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity, and global responsibility."

By the year 2016, students at BAES will foster positive and productive personal and social behavior with the school and community through the development of core ethical values-respect, responsibility, compassion, and honesty-as demonstrated by:

- a) 0 tolerance for bullying

- b) *All students will participate in at least one community service project designated by the school and at least 50% of the students will participate in a second (or more) community service project(s) of their choice.*
- c) *100% of students participate in at least two cross-grade activities or projects with at least two different classes*
- d) *0 tolerance for academic dishonesty*

Baseline:

2007-2008 *Every student participated in one community service project selected by the school-Swim-a-thon for bed nets*

2008-2009 *Students participated in one cross-grade activity*

2009-2010 *Teachers will be responsible for a monthly reading buddies cross-grade activity with a different grade level*

2009-2010 *incident reports filed on bullying and academic dishonesty*

There is evidence that the committee which developed this objective represent varied stakeholder groups of the school. Objective 2 obviously has the intent of developing respect, responsibility, compassion and honesty in the students of BAES to demonstrate the school's mission, and the Team views this as consistent with ethical norms and as demonstrating respect for persons of all races, creeds, and cultures. The school also chose this objective as a result of perceived need as the school has seen an increase in academic dishonesty, even into the earlier grades.

The objective has already been achieved in part, according to the baseline. The Team understands that the committee recognizes this fact, but believes that continued performance over time will institutionalize these activities and these expectations. The Team, however, feels this objective should offer goals that are not easily achievable in the next year or two and be student performance based; simple participation will not assure a change in student attitudes. Thus, in echoing the MSA staffer who performed the Technical Review, there needs to be "some assessment of student performance", or some measure of change in student attitudes. As written, the measures of the objective are simply school expectations..."0 tolerance for academic dishonesty" and "0 tolerance for bullying." The Team recommends rewording these to show a change in student performance with regard to academic dishonesty and bullying.

The objective is not student performance driven in the way it is expressed. "Teachers will be responsible for a monthly reading buddies cross-grade activity with a different grade level." The objective seems to simply require the teachers to place the program in action. The Team recommends that the objective be rewritten such that it is not teacher driven. The objective does not seek to improve compassion for students in other grades if they simply participate in two cross-grade activities. The goal is to see a change in the

attitudes and behaviors of the students. The Team recommends the school use a measure of student performance, perhaps a graded reflection or short questionnaire where attitudes are scaled, so the change can be noted. Alternatively, there could be a before and after attitude survey. Then the results of this can be tracked school-wide over the next 7 years with a level of expected growth. Perhaps the committee might include awareness training in after class (or school-wide) sessions on the definition of academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Action Plans

Action plans are the point of contact between vision and reality; they are the bridges to the future. Here is where Teams shift from poetics and emotion to metrics and task analysis. Implementation of the action plans is the point in the process where idealism and creativity meet the realities of time constraints, the budget and the natural and frustrating resistance that accompanies innovation and change.

One of the major points of the Action Plan for Objective #1 concerns the MAP Program. This program has been recently acquired by the school through a grant from the Office of Overseas Schools. Two of the school's teachers were sent to a workshop at the International School of Dakar, Senegal to be able to implement the MAP Program. The workshop attendees have spoken very enthusiastically about the testing program and this enthusiasm has spilled over to the rest of the teaching staff. Also built into the Action Plan for Objective #1 is planning so that discussion will take place about the results of the testing and making individualized lesson plans. Parents will also be informed about the MAP Program so that they will understand why the school has acquired this tool. A reading program to help deliver the goals for acquiring reading comprehension is included. Next, there is provision in the plan for acquiring materials to implement the goals. In the Action Plan for Objective #1 are activities that will help to enhance the reading program and assist with acquiring skills for comprehending what is read. The last item in the plan is to revise and update annually.

The plan includes all the necessary steps in building a solid reading program. However, in the Validation Team's view, the writing element from the previous objectives needs to be incorporated in the action plan for Objective #1. The teachers keep saying that reading and writing "go hand-in-hand" but keeping up the writing objective has not been considered. This does not mean that they will not be working with the students on writing but the Team recommends that the initiatives be refined and merged in this area so that the reading and writing actually do go "hand-in-hand." This would make the plan truly thorough and comprehensive. Of course this also assumes that in carrying out a total reading program, differentiation of the different

ages of the students is addressed; for example, contrasting learning to read from reading to learn.

The plan mainly focuses on the first few years of the seven-year-cycle, however, there are places where it is stated that they will need to review and revise as the plan is implemented. Some of the items are indicated as “on-going.”

The action plan for Objective #1 contains who will be responsible for the objective, the time period to accomplish the objective and resources needed. There are a number of people who are responsible for completing the items and because BAES is a small school, the same names and departments appear more than once. The timelines are reasonable but will need to be revised as the seven-year-cycle unfolds. The specific resources are not named but the kinds of resources needed are indicated; some are in the planning stage.

The Team finds that the major steps and strategies in the action plan for Objective #1 are in place. The Action Plan #1 will help the school to define growth in the area of reading with the exceptions of areas mentioned above.

The Action Plan for Objective 2 is a fifteen-step plan. The Team had difficulty understanding exactly what was meant by some of the sections and recommends BAES improve the clarity of wording and introduce greater detail so there will be no need to try to read between the lines over the seven years that this action plan will be in effect. Clarity would also be improved by making the steps of the plan sequential, or chronological, which the committee agrees needs to be done.

The Team found the action plan for Objective #2 not adequate to ensure all that is necessary to accomplish the objective. For example, two sections of the objective deal with academic dishonesty and bullying. However, neither the school's Policy Manual nor the Parent/Student Handbook address either issue. The Parent/Student Handbook has an entire section on discipline and behavior with no mention of bullying or academic honesty. The committee has enthusiastically embraced the idea of making this action plan more comprehensive.

The Team recommends that BAES review the column, “Evaluation/Indicators of Success for both Objective #1 and Objective #2 to make sure that the desired results will give them the information that they need. A number of these are outputs, or measurable products; and not outcomes, which would document a change in learning or behavior and truly indicate success toward meeting the overall objective.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION

The Standards for Accreditation are the foundation of accreditation. Accredited schools are expected to meet the 12 Standards, qualitative statements defining expected levels of quality in all areas of the school and its operations—its educational programs, its services, and its operations.

To be granted Accreditation, the school must meet all 12 of the Standards. If, in the judgment of the Commission one or more Standards are not met, the school will be granted Probationary Accreditation. If the school meets all of the Standards but does not meet one or more of the Indicators of Quality or one or more requirements of the protocol Stipulations will be added to the school’s accreditation.

During the course of its visit to the school, the Validation Team sought evidence through observation and the study of documentation that the school meets the Standards.

In this section, the Validation Team presents its observations, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each Standard for Accreditation.

Philosophy/Mission. *The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school’s philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Philosophy/Mission Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team’s judgment regarding this objective?

The Team interviewed the remaining members of the group that worked on the school’s mission and belief statements and random members of the school community. They

reviewed school board minutes, the *BAES Buzz* newsletter, and the Planning Team meeting minutes.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

The Team commends the Planning Team for linking Objective #2 of the Plan for Growth and Improvement to the school's mission. In aligning the three character traits mentioned in the mission with the objective, the school is implementing a system to assess its own effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and belief statements.

Parental involvement is mentioned in both the mission and belief statements. Although the Team was told that reviving the Parent Teachers Association has so far not worked, the Team was impressed with the high priority the school places on parent involvement and commends the school's continuing efforts to engage parents in the educational program.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team suggests rewording the mission statement for consistency in point of view; the first sentence is in the third person and the second sentence in the first person. The Team also suggests rewording the first section of the Belief Statement to improve the grammaticality of "We believe every child . . . deserves the opportunity to achieve *their* full potential."

The Team supports the school's expressed need for updating those of its publications which do not yet display the current statements such as the school's web site or in the policy manual. BAES does not yet have a DOAS on Middle States' Association's web site; being able to refer potential parents to BAES's accrediting agency's web site would help ensure that new parents coming from other educational systems understood what was meant by the word "accredited" in its mission statement.

Governance and Leadership. *The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Governance and Leadership Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

The Banjul American Embassy School's founding certificate, issued by the government of The Gambia, is called Articles of Association. The governing body of the school is the school board. The school board consists of a representative of the United States Ambassador and six voting members elected annually by the BAES Association (referred to at BAES as the "AGM") which is made up of the director, the teachers and parents of currently enrolled students. Each member of the BAES Association has one vote. Annual general meetings of the Association are held in October. Extra meetings can be called as needed.

The board has monthly meetings, unless extra meetings are needed. Minutes are available for all non-executive sessions of the board. In practice, the director makes recommendations, which the board discusses and votes on. They establish yearly goals and discuss, or self evaluate the level of achievement of those goals during board training sessions. The board has numerous committees which work on various aspects of board responsibilities and make presentations to the board. "Committees are open to all board members and parents." Teacher participation is encouraged, but not obligatory. In board minutes the Team found evidence of the Building Committee, the Finance Committee, the Policy Committee, the Staffing Committee, and the Marketing Committee.

The Building Committee has been highly challenged. The current school property is aging and is rented from two landlords. The board recognizes the need for new facilities, and is exploring ways to bring the program to fruition. The Brusubi property is a donation to the school by the Gambian president dependent on development within

ten years. The board is “pushing to get paperwork for government permission to build.” The likelihood is that the building program will unfold in phases. The new property has been enclosed, a borehole installed, and a utility building constructed. If an amphitheatre and a conference facility are the next step it will be to generate income for ongoing construction. A cost-sharing possibility being considered is co-building on the property with an international non-governmental organization. The board's written document outlining its plan for facilities development is the board minutes.

The Team was impressed by the pride expressed by both the director and individual board members in the accomplishments of staff and students. The Team learned about frequent ways in which students gain recognition for accomplishments within their own areas of the school. Sometimes in the annual AGM they are recognized in a larger way; there is also recognition in print in the *BAES Buzz*. There is a sense, however, that there is a need for more school-wide student recognition.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and supervision of students for school events and field trips. Sufficient supervisory personnel are required before approval is given.

BAES' security personnel underwent intensive 6 week long training by soldiers from the military camp. There has developed a supportive relationship between the military camp and BAES, which are in close proximity. Every effort to maintain confidentiality is undertaken.

Coffees have been instituted where parents are invited to come and share or ask questions, get updates on school activities. Though this has yet been well attended, it is a laudable effort, and worth maintaining.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

During our visit, the school community, including all board members, gave generously of their time to answer the Team's questions. In the AFG self-study process, all groups in the school participated, and everyone was heard. The Team recognizes such collegiality as evidence of real leadership, which can only lead to a school's success.

Qualifications and experience are highly desired in hiring staff. Once on board, many rich opportunities are made available to professional staff members for training. Conferences, workshops, and a pre-school year retreat all provide valuable means of increasing the sense of collegiality and professional development.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team did not see the Articles of the BAES Association--more often referred to in the school as the "AGM"--specifying such matters as its purposes, who are members, and how they may accomplish their goals. The Team also did not see By-Laws for the BAES Association, which would explain such things as the terms, rules, and authority of the school board. The self-study says these documents were voted in by parents in February, 1984.

Continuity is an important factor in governance and leadership in schools with high turnover of personnel, and various people mentioned the need to institutionalize continuity. The Team commends the school board for its ongoing work on the policy manual. The Team heard discussed that BAES may need a policy requiring that directors develop and follow a procedure for providing transition to the next director so that, for example, the roles of accreditation teams and coordinators are sustained across administration changes without interruption, and so that ties with other organizations beneficial to the school such as the military camp and the Medical Research Council unit next to the school, have a chance to continue. Maintaining ongoing focus on efforts such as development and revision of policies across the years will be helped if the school adopts staggered two year terms for the school board instead of the current one-year terms, which the Team understands is under discussion. The Team observes that if the board's term lengths are specified in the "AGM's" By-Laws rather than just in the policy manual, more stakeholder involvement would be required to change them, providing greater governance accountability and increasing parent participation in the school.

The self study says that yearly orientation is conducted for all board members by qualified personnel and the trainer has attended board training workshops. The self-study also says that the board evaluates its own effectiveness yearly. The board recognizes that it would be beneficial if upcoming board training sessions would include hands-on workshops to help the board and director begin writing tools based on mutually agreed-upon criteria for evaluation of the director and for self-evaluation of the school board, as well as developing strategic plans.

The board chair and director work well together and frequent communication is maintained throughout the year. The director states that the school board is supportive and does not interfere in the day to day operation of the school. The Team encourages the school to review its budget preparation procedures with a view of keeping the roles of governance and leadership distinct.

School Improvement Planning. *The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school’s philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the School Improvement Planning Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

The Team interviewed representatives of the committee which worked on this standard for the self-study, read a draft marketing study, reviewed the policy manual, school board minutes of the past two years, a survey, a draft IT plan, a curriculum cycle review chart, and past *BAES Buzz* newsletters.

It is obvious to the Team that planning is going on at BAES; that the issues relating to long range or strategic planning in the areas of finance, facilities development, staffing, staff and curriculum development, technology enhancement, and enrollment have been extensively discussed and at various times acted on in the school. There is evidence the school’s *AFG* improvement plans are developed with broad-based school community participation and input, and that they are supported by the school community and approved by the governance where appropriate. Other plans for development are informally based on general school community knowledge of baseline performance information, trends, and projections.

There is evidence that agencies external to the school have reviewed and validated the school’s planning and school improvement processes. The school receives Validation Team visits from MSA and periodic visits from the O/OS REO. BAES has been

discussing building a new facility for a number of years, and submitted several years' budgets for review in the process of applying for an OPEC grant. The school had its building plans downsized to a more affordable size by the organization Future in our Hands and a recent O/OS capital grant was spent on developing the current facility instead of beginning construction on the new one. In the spring of 2008 school board/parent/staff sessions with a marketing strategist from the U.S. Embassy produced a *Strategic Marketing and Implementation Work Program for BAES for Year 2009* which the school has not yet had time to analyze.

A curriculum development consultant was called in to work with the staff on site for one week in February, 2008. Four faculty members were sent to inservicing programs offered by the DOS Office of Overseas Schools during the summer of 2008, two staff members were trained in Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing in Dakar, and the staff is sent to conferences of the Association of International Schools in Africa whenever they are near enough to afford. Weekly student early-release days on Friday established during 2008-09 have provided needed staff development and planning time. The school recognizes this time will be indispensable when the staff, who already seem to be working at full capacity, begins working on curriculum.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

Regarding the MSA Plan for Growth and Improvement, information about the school's planning processes, its improvement plans and goals is analyzed, and then communicated to stakeholders and the public. However, there is no record that the data collected or the results of implementing the improvement plans was analyzed, communicated to those stakeholders, or used to drive instruction.

The only long range or strategic plan available for the Team to review was a draft document in the area of Information Technology. Plans lack integral composition: the Team was referred to the school board minutes for the school's long range building

plans, and the Team gathered other information from the *BAES Buzz* and the newsletter which preceded it, which together form a valuable school archive dating from 2004 providing snapshots of the school at regular intervals.

The Team has emphasized to BAES the value of documentation. All improvement plans in a school--even an annual budget or a financial long range plan--are educational plans, and need to be drawn up with the goal of enhancing student learning, in balance with and in support of all other such plans in the school. As a teacher on the committee studying this standard told the Team, "we realize now that BAES needs to put things in writing to provide continuity." The Team strongly recommends that the school draw up and publish cohesive, separate written plans for finances, facilities development, and so on, across the school. The Team names this need as a monitoring issue.

MONITORING ISSUE	
Standard for Accreditation: School Improvement Planning	
No. of Indicator of Quality: 3.5	
Evidence: This indicator is partially met. The Validation Team was shown a draft Technology Development plan drawn up several years ago, but neither the director nor the school board knew of any separate, written document that could be called a long range or strategic finance or facility development plan.	
Required Action: BAES needs to draw up written long range finance and facility development plans.	

Finances. *Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes is dedicated to the school's operations.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Finances Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

The Team drew evidence for this standard from first-hand observation, discussions with administration, staff, students, parents, and board members, and review of BAES budget documents, the student fee schedule and admission information, the BAES policy manual, and the auditor's report from the previous fiscal year. The school currently is operating within its planned budget. BAES maintains a reserve fund equal to 50% of the operating budget. The BAES policy manual states numerous policies related to finances, found in both section 3 and 4. The board of BAES assists in the creation of and the approval of the budget. The administration of the school is consulted in the budget preparation process and in-turn, seeks teacher input into the allocation of funds. In the school's admission packet, information about all fees associated with attending school is clearly communicated to all potential parents. The policy manual states clear policies regarding tuition, collections, and refunds. BAES has received grants from the U.S. government to assist with U.S. teacher salaries; the purchase of educational materials, supplies and equipment; and for the school's staff development and training program.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team supports the realization of the board that the financial stability of the school is somewhat uncertain, with operating expenses funded primarily by the number of students enrolled in the school each academic year. Due to the transient nature of the current and potential student body, the projections for growth are limited and do not indicate a clear rise, but neither do they indicate a clear decrease in the population and the funding for the school.

The board minutes have been referenced as evidence of the short and long term financial plans for the school. While items were discussed and decisions were documented related to finance in board meetings, the Team strongly recommends that an independent financial plan be drafted, addressing both short and long-term goals.

As referenced by the board treasurer and chair, the reserve fund of the school is designated for certain emergencies, as well as to cover budget surpluses or deficits. This reserve fund would be sufficient to cover the costs of business interruption and thus could be viewed as the insurance plan for such instances. However, the Team has found no casualty, property, or liability insurance for employees and governance, and names this lack as a monitoring issue.

MONITORING ISSUE
Standard for Accreditation: Finances
No. of Indicator of Quality: 4.11
Evidence: This indicator is partially met. While possessing a reserve fund equal to 50% of the current operating budget, BAES does not carry any formal insurance coverage outside of employee health insurance (which is not included in this indicator). This information was communicated directly from the board chair, board treasurer, and the director. The Team allows that the reserve fund could substitute for business interruption insurance.
Required Action: BAES needs to maintain adequate casualty, property, and liability insurance for employees and governance.

Facilities. *School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Facilities Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

Information for this section was largely taken from observations by the Team. The BAES school facility consists of Building A, with administration offices, teacher workroom, library, computer lab, and French and middle school classrooms. Building B comprises the Early Childhood Center with PK-K, art, and a resource room. Building C

holds classrooms for grades 1/2 and 3/4. Building SL is the purpose-built science lab with a storage room for chemicals and supplies. There is a small generator house and a garage which has been turned into a workshop/maintenance area. Building A has air conditioning, but the others rely on windows and fans for air circulation and cooling. All are single story buildings except Building A. These units are connected by sidewalks lined with gardens.

The grounds are enclosed by a wall topped across the front with broken glass, which is not uncommon in The Gambia. Two gates are available for ingress and egress as students are dropped off outside one gate and faculty drive in the other. A third gate was added for emergencies after the coup in 1994, due to the proximity of the other two gates to the nearby military camp.

Many trees and plants scattered through the compound make the open spaces more attractive. There is a basketball/volleyball court, a dirt soccer field, two playgrounds (a smaller one for PK-K and a larger one for grades 1-8, and an uncovered outdoor eating area where all students meet and eat together. That poses a problem if there are lunchtime rains during the three-month rainy season. A generator provides electricity for the entire school when the current is cut periodically.

Three years ago the U.S. Embassy provided safety experts to evaluate the buildings which resulted in civil engineering designs and completion of necessary structural work to reinforce the pillars in Building A. The embassy continues to provide significant support with regard to facilities in the form of periodic structural reviews.

This year the computer lab is being upgraded with furnishings, printers, and computers with grant monies. Additionally, through a group effort of teachers, parents, and students, the library book collection has been culled and the shelving and furniture have been reorganized. Paint and locally designed murals have made the space more attractive and user friendly. The Team noted a good deal of pride in what has been accomplished, both in the results that students now enjoy, and the sense of community which was enhanced by carrying out the work together.

The challenges presented to BAES are due to the high rents paid to two landlords, the effects of age on the structures and capital equipment such as the generator, and space limitations. While rooms dedicated to part-time instructors now could be used instead for classrooms if needed, significant growth in student numbers would create a space problem. At present, there is minimal storage available both for school and student property, though the current administration has led an admirable effort to free up useable "dead" space. PE equipment and PE storage are also lacking.

Constant and ready help from the Embassy is considered “a big plus” as BAES deals with ongoing and recurrent building problems. Another plus of the facility cited by both parents and students were the school's science and computer labs.

The board and administration, striving to fulfill their mission and provide the best school experience possible to their students, have recognized the limitations of the existing school, and have made plans to build a new school on land donated by the president of The Gambia. There seems to be common agreement in the school community that once funding is available, building will proceed. Creative ways of funding are being explored as the economy has decreased their reserves by approximately 30%. Architectural plans have been drawn up, but are now being downsized and simplified. It is the hope of the board to have a new facility within 4 years. Students, staff, and parents dreamed of a common meeting space or multi-purpose unit, a small cafeteria, playground.... the commitment that has been shown across stakeholder groups to provide for quality education for the children will serve them well as they seek to fulfill these dreams. Though, it must be noted that the existing facility was described by one faculty member as a “quaint little school...not too big...intimate.” One gets the impression that, though a new facility is greatly anticipated, there will be sadness in leaving the current grounds on the part of students, parents and staff.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

The Validation Team was impressed with the support staff of the school. The facilities are cleaned, maintained, and secured daily by a staff of eight, with one person being dedicated to each building, one maintenance worker, and two groundskeepers. They have contributed much to the atmosphere of BAES, not only by doing their jobs very well, but by working as a team, and helping where needed, even supervising students on occasion. With longevity on the part of these maintenance staff members, they have a significant sense of ownership and belonging to the school. A maintenance supervisor is responsible for overseeing the cleaners and yardmen. He is also a skilled carpenter, and points out the need for repairs to the administration when they seem necessary for the safe operation of the school. The director has developed a paper-based work order request system which has made maintenance more orderly and accessible.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team agrees with the need expressed by teachers for increased lighting in Building B.

School Climate and Organization. *The school’s organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the School Climate and Organization Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team’s judgment regarding this objective?

At BAES there is a willingness to assume responsibility for tasks when perceived. Due to the small school size, staff, parents, and board members take on multiple roles and responsibilities. The wide participation across stakeholder groups ensures that the mission and the school improvement plan are widely supported.

A logical and clear table of organization does not exist, except a minimal version in the policy manual. A job description for the director is clearly laid out in the form of responsibilities, which is also located in the policy manual. Support staff job descriptions have been recently written. Still needed would be job descriptions for teaching staff. Teachers are qualified in the areas to which they are assigned, but also carry out support for students needing counseling, special needs, and ESL help.

Orientation for new staff members, mandated by policy, takes place at an annual retreat, and helps to "promote Team building, trust, and support." There is no existing staff handbook, as the information for staff is communicated at the retreat.

The salary schedule for support staff is being revised currently. There is a new salary schedule for teachers but they did not seem able to explain to the Team what the schedule is or how it works.

Teachers turn in weekly lesson plans for the director's approval. The director drops into the classrooms multiple times during the year after which she may write a note about the observations. There is one formal evaluation each year. The teacher (may) will select a time for the formal visit in March, and a classroom observations is written up by the director. An end of the year evaluation is written in April/May for all professional staff members including comments on drop-in visits, the formal observation and other information gathered during the year.

The school is a member of the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA), and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Staff members have been encouraged to attend workshops and sessions with AERO and AISA." A segment of the parents at BAES demonstrate high levels of commitment to, and pride in their school through volunteer efforts such as the library makeover, participation in the AFG process, and board membership. Monthly coffee mornings are held during school hours in an attempt to increase parent participation. Those parents who already are involved are frustrated that those efforts have not yet been successful. Attempts to revive the PTA have also met with limited success. It was stated, "One of the biggest issues in the school is getting parent involvement, which is prioritized for BAES in its policy manual as well as its mission and belief statements."

Local organizations play varied roles in the life of the school. The US Embassy is extremely supportive in many ways. Collaboration between BAES and the Peace Corps is in the budding stages, with a student field trip to a village Peace Corps-supported project. There is discussion of other ways that Peace Corps could enrich the experience of the students at BAES. The Medical Research Council unit in The Gambia (MRC), located very close to the school, has also been supportive.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

The high level of collegiality, support and appreciation is exemplified at BAES. This is evidenced on all levels: among the board members, among the professional teaching

staff, and among the maintenance/cleaning staff. They freely help others in necessary tasks, and support each other to a high degree.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team encourages the school to complete compensation schedules for support staff already being looked into. A clear school organizational chart and job descriptions for teaching staff also need to be completed, and the Team recommends a staff handbook be developed for reinforcement of what is communicated at the annual retreat, and to help to orient teachers who miss the retreat because they are employed during the school year.

The staff often works beyond contracted hours without pay, and with the added responsibilities in preparing for AFG, it was stated that they had "put in 150%." Their dedication is admirable. However, care must be taken. As one staff member stated "there is a lot of pressure on staff, and I sometimes feel overwhelmed." At this point there is no qualified nurse, librarian, ESL teacher, curriculum coordinator, or counselor at BAES. The Team believes creative planning and funding would enable some partial fulfillment of this need, and feels that the school's plan to develop its curriculum and to automate the library, as well as meet the ongoing academic language acquisition needs of its current very multilingual student body, require more time and professional support than the current staff are able to provide.

BAES has a policy regarding student conduct, and there is also a discipline policy and a code of conduct included in the Parent/Student Handbook. Consequences are included only for extreme infractions. Further clarification would be useful, and the Team recommends the school consider including in its behavior policies a reference to academic dishonesty and bullying which are a focus of Objective #2 of the Plan for Growth and Improvement, but not now mentioned in either policy.

Students told the Team several times that they felt taking part in more interschool competitions would have a positive effect on school spirit.

Health and Safety. *A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Health and Safety Standard is		

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

BAES's health care is adequate. There are understood procedures that occur when a student is ill or there is an accident; policies about what medicines are available to students; medicines are kept in a safe place; and medical attention is close at hand. Every two years the school has first aid training and next door is the Medical Research Council where some of the parents are employed and from which the school can receive prompt help in an emergency.

The director of the school keeps all medicine locked in her office and has a list of what medicines may be administered to particular students. The health form filled out at the beginning of the year asks parents to list current medications (name, dosage, frequency and treatment length) being taken by children as of September. First aid kits are strategically located around the campus and are checked "periodically" to make sure there are adequate materials in the kits.

Students are in a closed campus and not allowed off campus. The guard questions any student leaving the campus and double checks their permission to leave campus. Visitors are asked to sign in at the office and guards question anyone's right to come onto campus and then get permission to allow them to enter. During drills, homeroom teachers take attendance noting students who are absent for the day. If a student is absent, it is up to the homeroom teacher to call home if the parent has not called the school already to report the child's illness or absence from school. The normal procedure is that the parent calls the school. In the self-study, it was mentioned that the school calls after three days but the practice now is that parents are called on the same day.

A current health record is kept for each student in the administrative assistant's office. If there are any items on the health form that should be communicated to appropriate personnel, the director gives them this information verbally. The director ensures that the staff is kept up-to-date on relevant health, wellness, and safety information and practices, including procedures to deal with individual student needs. The director has also established a working relationship with the MRC next door and during times of emergencies either the student/staff member can be taken directly to the MRC or someone comes to the campus. Other contacts are kept by the administrative assistant who is Gambian and has knowledge of local resources.

Water is often an item of concern in third world countries, and in this semi-tropical country children can get very hot playing outside. Students are encouraged to bring their own bottled water to school but water is provided from large bottled water containers with spigots where students/staff may get water that is safe to drink when they require more water.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

The school's guards were recently given a 1.5 month security training which included proactive defense techniques by the military camp located next to the school. A side benefit to obtaining this training was that the school established a relationship with the unit.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Validation Team was shown emergency guidelines which cover all areas of emergency from fire to lock-downs which are taken from the United States Embassy Emergency Plans. The Team recommends these be updated and made specific to BAES. This would include developing a form to report accidents, and compiling a list of emergency phone numbers to call, e.g., fire department; police; doctors/nurses willing to come to the campus in an emergency, or contacts at the MRC on whom BAES can rely in an emergency. BAES may want to consider keeping formal records of fire drills, including areas of improvement. The present method of sound for the fire drill (support

service individual rings a hand bell) is not adequate. Some members of the Team did not go out for the drill because they didn't hear the bell.

The Team recommends BAES update the "Student Medical History Report" to include what inoculations students have received. The Team also recommends that there be a clause placed in the parent handbook that states that parents are responsible for updating the medical history form when there are changes and to notify the school when students are on medicine and what should happen to the medicine when it comes to school.

Health education takes place but not in a formal way since there is no separate health curriculum. The early grades definitely talk about nutrition and keeping their bodies in good condition as well as other health issues. Other health issues are found in the science curriculum. The Team recommends BAES draw up a separate health curriculum for the entire school.

The Team recommends first aid instruction continue to be provided for all of the staff, including support staff, with an emphasis on what should be done for injured students, or what the signs of serious illnesses are which are appropriate to The Gambia.

Educational Program. *The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school's mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Educational Program Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

The school's curriculum was first created by a past school board and now is being replaced, especially in the core subjects, with the AERO standards. The present curriculum does contain appropriate standards and benchmarks. It is written to meet the needs of each age group from PK to Grade 8. The educational program defines desired student outcomes as expressed in terms of student skills and knowledge. The curricula as well as curriculum maps are published on the website for the whole community to review. In the policy manual, there is a description of the requirements for curriculum and who is responsible for the curriculum.

The teachers are presently working to create a curriculum that represents what they are actually teaching in the classroom. To do this they have a two-fold approach. First, they are meeting informally to talk about their teaching practices and to learn from each other, and are finding needs for more vertical and horizontal articulation. The director has indicated that the teachers are indeed inspired to do well and to use best practices in the classroom and this is the reason it named the Elementary School Program as one of BAES' strengths. The Team agrees with this assessment. At this point, however, there is no formal educational program description that would capture the good teaching practices going on at the school. While talking to both teachers and students separately, both groups validated that both child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities are included in the teachers' plans. The students talked about being challenged, being responsible for their own education and being included in what they are learning.

Teachers have also begun the revision of parts of the curriculum. The math curriculum, for example, has been revised by the staff as a whole. They discussed where to appropriately place standards so that there was articulation. This process is similar to the mapping discussions held amongst teachers to determine whether content is missing or repeated. Part of the planning that is going on is to also include, for each content area, a philosophy, an explanation and reason for using a certain program to deliver the curriculum, and to develop assessment tools that will give evidence of student learning.

In the area of social studies, standard 5 lends itself to understanding how individuals and groups contribute to the development of a society and its culture. Students are encouraged to learn about citizenship not only of their own culture but of other cultures as well. The social studies curriculum contains provisions for problem-solving techniques. The Team feels consideration should be given to service learning and community service as part of the curriculum.

The size of the school makes articulation between the Elementary School and the Middle School easier. They are located next to each other and share some of the same teachers.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

There appears to be a “renewed” spirit of cooperation amongst the teachers. It was noted that prior to this year, teachers were working in isolation and that there was not a great deal of collaboration. This has changed and teachers are talking with each other about educational programs and practices. From the discussion with several teachers, it was evident that the spread of an inquiry based program is beginning to take hold at BAES and there is a desire to know more about this method of teaching/learning. This initiative from the teachers is to be commended. This enthusiasm extends to the students. They are happy with the school, and its ability to challenge them and to create activities in which they can problem-solve and use their critical thinking skills.

Another commendation to be given to BAES is the way that the school has integrated the activities to reflect the student learning skills. Instead of having just an activity that is just fun, now they plan for the activity to not only be fun but to serve an academic purpose as well. Teachers treat the educational program as everything that happens during the day.

The students described the teachers as caring about them by explaining the lessons well, helping them when they needed help even beyond the school day, challenging them, including them in the process of learning, and giving them an opportunity to show what they knew.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

BAES recognizes that it has a good deal of work to do on the curriculum. It has a written curriculum that was developed by one of the previous school boards without teacher input and is now partially replaced with the AERO standards which the teachers have not yet fully adopted. The AERO curriculum is complete with standards and benchmarks in the core subject areas. The current curriculum does not include a

scope and sequence or an assessment piece although both are recognized as needed. After talking with different teachers they indicated that it is accurate to say that the curriculum is not functional or not in use in its entirety. This is recognized by the administration and teachers. They have, therefore, started to work on different parts of the curriculum such as social studies, science, and math which has received the most revision. Also included in the current curriculum document are standards for art, physical education, music, and technology. This means that the present curriculum is a mixture of the old board-written curriculum and the revisions the teachers have begun. There are no standards in the current curriculum for health or for modern foreign languages (French). A five-year curriculum review cycle has been developed to space out the effort and money required to update areas of the curriculum.

There is a desire to adopt the AERO standards and the teachers, all of whom make up the Planning Team. Several teachers have attended the Overseas Schools workshops held in Virginia but the Team recommends sending teachers specifically to the AERO curriculum writing workshops to help to put the AERO Standards into practice.

The Team recommends BAES consider a curriculum coordinator either full or half time so that the curriculum can be documented as soon as possible and allow teachers to focus on their main task of working with the students; so that all the required elements will be included in the curriculum document; so that time will be given to review documents within the newly established curriculum cycle; so that interaction amongst teachers of all levels to plan for vertical and horizontal articulation will continue; so that there will be consistent updating of teachers new to the school and the curriculum; and so that teachers will adhere to the program selected by BAES making the written curriculum and the taught curriculum the same.

The Team recommends that the school decide on best practice, and BAES mission-aligned practice, in the area of instructional methodologies. Many teachers indicate that they are using an inquiry based program but it seems that this is an individual endeavor and not a school-wide program. There are plans to include this piece into the curriculum planning and teaching units. The use of critical thinking, study skills, problem-solving skills appears to be part of the taught curriculum rather than part of the written curriculum or educational program. The use of technology is integrated into the taught curriculum but is a separate program in the curriculum document.

While visiting the classrooms, the Team found evidence of a variety of group learning settings such as working with individuals, working with groups, or whole class situations. The fact that the classes consist of two separate grade levels does facilitate and also make it necessary to differentiate the lessons.

The Team recommends BAES become more data-driven; for example, administering the MAP by the end of April would allow the school to make plans to evaluate the results and form action plans from the analysis.

Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning. *The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team’s judgment regarding this objective?

In the past, the accreditation Plan for Growth and Improvement has caused BAES to use various external standardized assessment tools in order to measure students’ achievements. The ERB WrAP was used to get a writing score, the SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) was used as a reading assessment, and the BERS was used for trying to understand student behavior. In addition to these assessments, teacher also used a formalized portfolio assessment as well as other informal tools.

With its new objective of improving reading, BAES has committed itself to using the MAP and has sent two of its teachers to a MAP workshop. In addition to the MAP, the teachers and administrator have indicated that they will continue to use other assessment tools such as the SRI and portfolios (but in a different way). Teachers and the administrator also use other informal methods of assessing both the students and the needs for providing a cohesive program in each of the subject areas. The “Student Support” meeting is held to determine professional development needs that will ultimately help student learning as well as discussions about particular students and what are the necessary steps needed to assist the student who may be struggling. Teachers meet with parents to explain students’ achievements and areas of strengths and weakness in parent conferences held three times a year or each trimester.

Teachers are not required to assign authentic inquiry-based, contextual, or task-based assessments. However, BAES's mission statement states the school will produce enthusiastic lifelong learners, and both a parent and a student representing the group that worked on the mission described such assessments going on in the school, and saw them as a way they feel students become lifelong learners. The Team observed ongoing assessment occurring throughout the school, with teachers in the upper school seeking frequent feedback from students before moving forward with a math lesson; the preschool teacher seeking regular feedback from the group she was reading aloud to; or a class teacher exacting feedback from an ESL student trying to understand the novel she was reading.

The MAP generates a Lexile score. This score enables children to find books that are at his/her reading level which means that children can have a better chance of enjoying what they are reading because the book is at their level and also it can help children to chose a book that will help them to grow as readers. BAES plans to put Lexiles on the spine of all its library books. The Validation Team encourages the school to put library services in place to ensure that Lexile scores will not dominate all student and parent borrowing choices in the library.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

BAES should be commended for providing MAP in order to have a test that will help them to improve their teaching and to increase student achievement. The school should also be commended on its decision to not make MAP its sole testing tool. They will rely on a variety of different assessments. This is important as the MAP cannot test every area such as the area of actual writing.

The BAES teachers and administration are to be commended for using assessments in order to implement the first objective regarding reading comprehension. It was found that students did not comprehend at a level commensurate with where they should be. This lead to the creation of the first objective that includes reading comprehension and the focus on materials that will help to increase reading comprehension.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team recommends that the school develop a comprehensive assessment policy that will help teachers to understand and use assessments that are required, and consider following the Understanding by Design (UbD) process that helps teachers to incorporate assessment into the curriculum.

At the moment, the analysis of the testing is not an area of strength. One of the difficulties in looking for trends in the results of the testing is that students' length of stay in the school is not long enough to look at patterns. So far, the analyzing of the test results have been left to one teacher and/or the administrator. Teachers may look at the results for their own classes, but the Team did not get the impression that the results were used to drive school-wide curriculum decisions or change teaching strategies.

At this point, the assessments are not aligned with the target curriculum. This should happen if the AERO standards are adopted and the school is using MAP. The MAP has been delayed due to the computer capacity and bandwidth. This has now been rectified and MAP could begin soon. Teachers will need to plan for meeting together to look at the results and make decisions based on the results for the educational program and for individual student achievement. This is a required component of the MAP program.

Some teachers are using self-reflections with their students and some are not. There is no school-wide consistency in this area. BAES does not have, at present, an assessment policy; however, teachers communicate their own policies to the parents. A more global picture of a school-wide policy would help to build school-wide objectives and support the curriculum.

Student Services. *The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.*

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Student Services Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

Though a small school where student numbers and budget constraints prevent the hiring of trained staff in the realm of "student services" BAES faculty provide varied opportunities for students both within the curriculum and without. Career training occurs in elementary grades through community helper studies. In middle school, the 8th graders have had units whereby they investigate careers and create a PowerPoint telling about the career they would choose and what they would need to study in order to pursue that career. Teachers have discussed developing a Career Day for the school. Counseling falls to the administration or teaching staff. Students will go to the director or a teacher with whom they feel comfortable when they face problems such as disagreements with another student. This is verified by the students themselves who expressed their sense of freedom to come to teachers when they need help with interpersonal problems or other issues. Though there is no one hired in the position of counselor, the task is deemed important and shared by the faculty.

Informal assessment is utilized in order to address special needs of individual students. As teachers assess in the classroom, and share their findings with their colleagues, plans fall into place to help each student achieve to their potential.

Students' files are kept in the office. These are complete for all new students; however the information for some of the students who have been at BAES longer has not been recently updated, and although informal data as well is collected from former students in casual conversations, e-mails, or re-visits, the files are usually not updated.

As new students come into BAES they are given a tour and admissions packet. This packet includes a welcome letter from the director, a printout of the first page on the website, a blank student health/information form, the school calendar, student supply list, admissions guidelines, tuition and fee payment schedule, an admission application, permission for photo and website release, an AFG informational brochure with explanation of the AFG process, and the school's mission statement and a diagram showing the pick-up /drop off route along with parent authorization for school pickup. As they come into school, they are given a Student Handbook. Admission testing is not occurring at this point, but the plan is to use MAP in this way.

Frequent newsletters from the classroom teacher pass along valuable information about not only activities in the classroom, but child development guidance. Report cards and

progress reports go home each term. Additionally, the school newsletter, the *BAES Buzz*, makes valuable parenting information accessible.

The drop off route and procedures are well designed, well written, and widely available to parents. BAES's small staff and financial constraints, and the non-availability of special ed resources in the community mean that the school can accept only students within a very limited range of impairment and suggest that others would be better served in another school. Policies and procedures to identify learning disabilities are basically informal. If a student is recognized as having a problem, recommendations are made to parents to seek testing elsewhere to evaluate the need. Students are only admitted if there is confidence that they can reach their potential at BAES.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team agrees with the school that there is a need for a health curriculum at BAES, which would include standards for career awareness activities across all grades.

A systematic and formalized effort to contact former students for follow up would allow the school another way to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's educational program and services and refine its Profile of Graduates.

Student Life and Student Activities. *The school provides access to non-discriminatory student activities that are age- and developmentally appropriate to supplement the educational program. A balance of academic, social, co- or extra-curricular and service activities is*

maintained. Student activities are selected to foster intellectual, cultural, and social growth as well as physical health and wellness. Student activities provide opportunities for student leadership and social interaction and encourage development of student interests. These activities are adequately financed, periodically reviewed by stakeholders, managed by school governance and leadership, and appropriate to the school's philosophy/mission.

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Student Life and Student Activities Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team's judgment regarding this objective?

Almost all of the school's activities are held during the school day. These activities are funded as part of the educational program and are funded adequately. This year, the school decided to extend the school day from 8:00 am - 2:00 pm Monday through Friday, to 8:00 am - 3:00 pm from Monday through Thursday, partly so that teachers could carry out less rushed instruction in the afternoons. Friday became an early release day for students so that teachers could use this time for AFG work. The added work load that AFG represented meant that many of the activities that the teachers planned after school were decreased. The decrease in after school activities was widely communicated and even the students articulated the reasons for the stoppage of activities. The school attempted to encourage parents to take over the after school program, but had only limited success in doing this.

Prior to this year, the student council was surveyed about what activities they would like to have after school and during the day. They themselves have initiated activities for the purpose of "having fun" and raising money for charitable organizations. They also wanted to raise funds in order to attend field trips. The students were active in swimming at all age levels. Parents are encouraged to offer activities to students either during the school day or after school. There is a parent who volunteers her time to teach music for a small stipend. The director asked additional parents to run other activities. There is even a form parents and volunteers complete to ensure that the activity is well-covered, safe, and can fit into the schedule. All activities are age-appropriate and as the older students even explained, "We are not allowed to play at recess with the younger children because they may get hurt." This seemed to be an accepted conclusion.

The teachers felt that there were too many activities that did not have any academic component and the students were doing the activities basically, just to have an activity. The teachers then decided to align the activities to an area of the curriculum so that the children were not only having fun, but they were learning as well. Activities are approved by the director.

In the area of student life, the teachers feel that the students need to be partners in their education and that at least part of the learning should come from them by assuming a responsibility for their own education. When speaking with the students, the area of responsibility and being partners in their own education was well-articulated. They felt that they had the opportunities to express their own creativity and were valued as partners in the learning process. The teachers noted that the ideas need to come from the students themselves and in a separate meeting the students echoed this and even welcomed the opportunity to be able to express their own ideas while completing activities within the classroom. Teachers establish in their classes that the students should not expect to receive help where they could help themselves and be accountable to themselves. Again, the idea of accountability is reaching the students because they expressed this same idea and, again, welcomed the opportunity to be stakeholders in their own education. They felt as if they were part of the process.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

There is a very healthy atmosphere within the school. The students that were interviewed stated that the best thing about the school was that it was a small school that was conducive to everyone being sensitive to one another, having friends and not letting anyone stand alone, and not having exclusive cliques being formed.

Students have a healthy respect for one another in this multi-cultural setting and seem to celebrate each other's "differences." Race, creed, gender do not enter into the student's reactions to one another and certainly the staff and administration set a good example in this area.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

At the moment, the activities after school are not happening due to the amount of work the AFG takes and the limited resources and time that the teachers have at this time. However, this is a temporary situation that will be expected to end when the AFG Team has left. The Team supports BAES's continuing to seek community members to run activities. The Student Council particularly was advocating re-instating activities, and could be active participants in getting their parents involved in sharing their interests and hobbies with the children in an activity.

The Team recommends BAES continue to involve students in planning processes and in holding them responsible for their own ideas and for their own work.

Student recognition is seen at BAES as an area needing strengthening. Teachers are beginning to discuss an idea to recognize individual talents by having a "Success Night" where students show what they can do best: a multi-intelligence evening. The teachers feel that all students merit some recognition and want to be sure this will happen. The Team encourages BAES to continue their planning for "Success Night" or a similar event for recognizing not only students but the work teachers and administrators do as well.

Some teachers noted that relationships among staff and students needed to demonstrate more respect, fairness, and understanding. The students are not always understanding of the staff's position and are not always known to treat them with respect according to some teachers. However, it was also noted that, in turn, the staff didn't always respect the students. The teachers are in discussion as to what they should be doing in order to improve relations. One suggestion is to have a program or activity at the beginning of the year where students and staff interact with each other in a way that would enable them to get to know one another better, believing the relationships will thereby grow. The need to monitor relationships is recognized and there is a willingness to plan to counteract any disrespect. The Team notes that in subsequent discussions with students and the staff, the perception that there is a lack of respect from either side did not present itself, but encourages BAES to continue to plan for promoting better relationships between the students and the staff.

Information Resources and Technology. *Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school's pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and*

extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

	Met	Not Met
The evidence seen and heard indicates that the Information Resources and Technology Standard is	X	

What evidence did the Validation Team see and/or hear to support the Team’s judgment regarding this objective?

Based on first-hand observation, discussions with administration, staff, students, parents, and board members, and review of the BAES Curriculum Cycle, and the technology acceptable use guidelines, the Team finds that the Banjul American Embassy School maintains a functioning library and computer lab, in addition to offering several other technological resources with examples including, a wireless Internet network, televisions, DVD players and VCRs. Both the library and computer lab are readily accessible and intentionally incorporated in the daily activities of the students. The library has recently undergone a culling process to remove volumes that were outdated or of poor quality. The materials contained in the library, while not fully automated, are partially catalogued and well organized, thus making resources easily accessible for students and teachers. The teacher staffing the library part-time, assists students in acquiring books and maintains records and organization. Students and teachers indicate that they are included in the process of selecting new materials for the library and take great pride in the library.

The computer lab consists of 14 computers of various makes and ages, all with Internet access. The computer lab is incorporated into the weekly schedule of every student beginning in kindergarten, as evidenced by class schedules. The computer lab staff is well trained with extensive background in information technology. Collaboration with teachers is evidenced by the coordination of activities implemented during the computer class times. Inquiry, research, and information literacy skills are developed by the activities planned that incorporate these resources. Information resources and technology are supported by the annual budget and are included in the curriculum/purchasing plan (BAES Curriculum Cycle), established on a ten-year cycle. Students and teachers are actively engaged in incorporating the technology resources into their instructional program in a way that fosters inquiry, research, and information literacy.

The Team supports the plans for the computer lab and library upgrade, taking place during the coming academic year.

What requirements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school exceed expectations in an exemplary manner?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school not meet?

None.

What elements of the Standard and/or Indicators of Quality does the school meet only partially and that are in need of either completion or improvement?

The Team supports the completion of the process of cataloguing the books in the library and the plans that are in place to purchase a computerized automation system during the coming academic year. To complete cataloguing and automation, the Team recommends the assignment of a full or part time specific staff member with dedicated time to complete the process. The Team concurs with the administration's observation of the inadequacy of the current selection of information resources in the library and supports the planned purchase of new materials. The Team recommends the technology plan draft proposal become formalized and completed to ensure that the school keeps pace with technological changes. The Team strongly recommends that the technology acceptable use policy be formalized and that use of computers depend on the prior signed commitment to this policy of both students and their parents.

ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

Only the Commissions of the Middle States Association have authority to grant accreditation to a school. However, the Validation Team is asked to recommend an accreditation action to the Commissions based on the evidence the Team observed during its visit and it has documented in this report.

First, the Validation Team’s recommendation is based on its judgment whether the school meets the 12 Standards for Accreditation. Second, the recommendation is based on the Team’s judgment whether the school meets the commitments and requirements of the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol:

- A focus on student performance and growth
- A culture of accountability for student performance
- A planning ethic
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Involvement of its community of stakeholders
- Foundational documents—a mission, beliefs, and a profile of graduates
- A planning ethic
- A Plan for Growth and Improvement that focuses on measurable objectives for growing and improving student performance and plans to achieve the objectives
- A plan for continuous monitoring and adjusting the Plan to be responsive to results

The Validation Team will be pleased to recommend to the Commission that it grant Accreditation for The Banjul American Embassy School. The Team names the following two monitoring issues.

MONITORING ISSUE
Standard for Accreditation: School Improvement Planning
No. of Indicator of Quality: 3.5
Evidence: This indicator is partially met. The Validation Team was shown a draft Technology Development plan drawn up several years ago, but neither the director nor the school board knew of any separate, written document that could be called a long range or strategic finance or facility development plan.
Required Action: BAES needs to draw up written long range finance and facility development plans.

MONITORING ISSUE

Standard for Accreditation: Finances

No. of Indicator of Quality: 4.11

Evidence: This indicator is partially met. While possessing a reserve fund equal to 50% of the current operating budget, BAES does not carry any formal insurance coverage outside of employee health insurance (which is not included in this indicator). This information was communicated directly from the board chair, board treasurer, and the director. The Team allows that the reserve fund could substitute for business interruption insurance.

Required Action: BAES needs to maintain adequate casualty, property, and liability insurance for employees and governance.

NEXT STEPS

As The Banjul American Embassy 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:

- **Implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement.**

When the Middle States Association grants accreditation to a school using the *Accreditation for Growth* 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 Validation Teams.**

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 Validation Teams to other schools.

- **Conduct Periodic Reviews**

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 Validation Team.

- **Complete a Mid-Term Report**

At the beginning of the third year in the accreditation term, submit a Mid-Term Report in which the school 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 will determine whether an on-site visit must be conducted to examine any areas of concern.

If the Report is acceptable and/or there were no significant issues raised by the visiting Team that warrant onsite follow-up, the staff may notify a school that a Mid-Term Review Visit is not required. Conversely, the staff may determine that the Report is not acceptable and/or there were issues raised by the visiting Team that require an onsite visit. If a visit is required, the school will be assessed a \$300 fee plus the Visitor's travel expenses.

If the Middle States staff determines that an onsite visit is not required, the school may request an onsite visit to obtain feedback from and support by a Visitor. Schools that request an onsite visit will be assessed a \$300 fee plus the Visitor's travel expenses.

- **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 Validation Team. It should be noted, however, that if the school has implemented a planning ethic and the *Accreditation for Growth* school improvement process has been ongoing as expected, preparing for the next Team visit should be an extension of work already underway.

CONCLUSION

The Validation Team felt there is a culture at BAES that extends far beyond the classrooms. We asked the 5th-8th graders what they understood by the term *global responsibility*, which appears in the school's mission and belief statement, and they told us it means being aware of and caring about others and what is going on around you-- not just yourself. We asked what is special about what they learn at BAES, and we were told that at BAES you learn the important things-- you try to sort out conflicts in other parts of the world, and learn from the varied international experiences of both the students and the teachers, because they come from all over, too. BAES grows individuals of character--critical thinkers who can transform the world into a better place for all.

However, the school needs to keep records of all this. It needs to become more analytical in writing, and draw conclusions from these analyses that will drive its strategies so it can continue to grow in the face of its challenges. As an example of this need, the Team notes its impression that BAES did itself an injustice in its self study. Many of the Indicators of Quality were either not rated or given a DK, and in many cases there was no comment or explanation why no rating was given, or why the rating was so low. Where there are comments, they are very brief. The Validation Team at times found itself in the strange position of searching for evidence for indicators when the self study told us there wasn't any, making us feel as if we were discoverers instead of validators.

In particular, in the section Student Support Services under the standard Student Services, 7 of the 10 indicators were given the rating of "1," or no evidence. The section on Special Needs is largely DK, or "don't know." In the Context of the School under Enrollment Trends I.A.a, enrollment figures were neither tallied nor analyzed. No evidence at all of student learning was given in I.C., although BAES has been administering a variety of standardized assessments, and a self designed Writing Portfolio Rubric over the past seven years as partial means to measure the achievement of the performance objectives. There is no explanation of how the school climate was assessed in III.D; no survey was used. In School Climate and Organization, the school rated itself a 1 on 6.11, saying that although it carries out orientation for new staff members, no written policy requiring orientation exists; yet the Team found this policy (#5.304) in the policy manual. None of the Indicators relating to schools with early age

programs were answered under any standard, despite the fact that the school enrolls children from the age of three.

We quote from the Reflection on the Analysis of the Reflection Rubric, "The Planning Team and Internal Coordinators indicate the lack of documentation and quality of the annual review process as areas for improvement. They also communicate that the data management process needs to include more stakeholders and a continuing analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on the data must take place."

The Team emphasizes the need for a development of a complete written curriculum document including among other things a philosophy (includes deciding on instructional best practice so that all agree), an assessment policy (telling what type of assessments will be used when) and standards-based unit plans. The written curriculum and the taught curriculum need to become one and the same.

The taught curriculum the Team observed convinced us that this will happen. Without exception, we saw great enthusiasm among the teachers for and eagerness to get working with the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. Progress can't happen fast enough in this school! There is no such thing as apathy here. Teachers are committed to the school, dedicated to their work, and take pride in the outcome of their efforts.

There is a very healthy atmosphere within the school. The students that were interviewed stated that the best thing about the school was that it was a small school that was conducive to everyone being sensitive to one another, having friends and not letting anyone stand alone. They respect one another and seem to celebrate each other's "differences." Race, creed, and gender do not enter into the student's reactions to one another and certainly the staff and administration set a good example in this area.

During the Team's visit, the school community, including all board members, gave generously of their time to answer the Team's questions. The Plan for Growth and Improvement is based on important objectives, and it arose out of collegial sharing among the teachers. In the AFG self-study process, all groups in the school participated, and everyone was heard. The Team recognizes such collegiality as evidence of real leadership, which can only lead to a school's success.

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