

**MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**

**COMMISSION ON
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



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

**Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School
Scotch Plains, NJ
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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 CSS 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 2008, a Validation Team representing the Commission on Secondary Schools visited Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Based on that visit, the Validation Team recommended to the Commission on Secondary 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 Secondary Schools to visit Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School because it sought re-accreditation through the *Accreditation for Growth* process. The Validation Team's visit came at the end of the school's seven-year accreditation. The Commission on Secondary 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 process 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 five members of the Validation Team to Scotch Plains-Fanwood High 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 Board of Education, staff, administration, student leaders, a randomly selected group of students, guidance counselors, media center staff, content area supervisors, the curriculum committee, head custodian and student activities and class advisors.

CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School is a comprehensive four year high school, based at the foot of the Watchung Mountains in Union County serving the suburban towns of Scotch Plains and Fanwood. Scotch Plains and Fanwood are attractive residential communities located in north central New Jersey about 25 miles west of New York City. These two high income communities have a combined population of approximately 50,000 people. Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, with an enrollment of about 1,500 students, offers a comprehensive program that serves the needs, aptitudes, and interests of its diverse student body.

In 1957, the present Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School located on Westfield Road was completed. In 1968, a major addition was added on the high school's 29 acre tract. On December 31, 1969, the first part of the new addition was opened. By May 1970, the entire new section including Media Center, science area, Multi-Purpose Room and auto shop was in use. Presently the entire facility is capable of serving 2000 students.

Perhaps one of the greatest tributes to the school is the consistency of its leadership. Since 1941 the high school has had only three principals. The longevity of each of these men as principal is a testimony to each one's dedication and contributions to the well rooted philosophy of challenges and accomplishments found in Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School over the years. The current principal, Dr. David Heisey, was appointed the principal of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School in February 1999.

The Validation Team’s Observations and Conclusions

It is the Validation Team’s strong recommendation that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School institutionalizes and formalizes a Planning Team as well as appoints an Internal Coordinator as required by the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol to ensure that the objectives and plans for improved student performance are carried out.

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.

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.

The mission of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School is:

The Mission of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District is to educate every student to become a confident and caring life-long learner who can communicate and contribute positively to the rapidly changing world. The district, in cooperation with the community, will provide an academic environment which values excellence, initiative, and diversity.

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.

The beliefs of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School are:

We believe:

- Academic achievement is our primary focus.
- Each child is valued and deserves respect.
- Each child has vast potential, which should not be limited.
- High academic expectations promote high academic achievement.
- The education of our children is the shared responsibility of the schools and the students themselves together with families and the community.
- Learning is a lifelong process.
- Children need time to be children.

- Learning is an active process.
- Diversity is a strength.
- Proficiency in the use of technology is vital to our students' success.
- People function best in a safe, supportive environment.
- Educational excellence is an investment in the future.

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.

The objectives of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School are:

Objective #1:

By the year 2015, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students will demonstrate increased academic achievement as measured by:

1. A 10 percentage point increase in the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced Proficient range on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment.
2. An 8 percentage point decrease in the percent of students scoring partially proficient on the High School Proficiency Assessment.

Baseline: Year: 2005-2007 Average

Language Arts

- 2084 Students took the Language Arts portion of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment test
- 33.3 % of students achieved scores within the Advanced Proficient range
- 58.8% of students achieved scores within the Proficient Range
- 7.9% of the students scored in the partially proficient range

Mathematics

- 2084 students took the Mathematics portion of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment
- 39.0% of students achieved scores within the Advanced Proficient range
- 51% of students achieved scores within the Proficient range
- 10% of the students scored in the partially proficient range

3. A 20 percentage point increase in the percentage of students scoring equal to or surpassing the New Jersey State mean on the SAT Writing Test.

Baseline: Year: 2005-2007 Average

Verbal

- School Average: 524
- State Average: 497

Essay

- School Average: 519
- State Average: 494
- 56.5% of the students were equal to or surpassed the New Jersey State Mean.

Objective #2:

By the year 2015, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students will demonstrate increased interest and engagement in school and learning by:

1. A 20% reduction in the percent of students that arrive late to school.

Baseline: Year: 2005-2007

- Total enrollment during 2005-2007 was 4349 students
- 627 students were tardy during this time span
- 14.4% of students enrolled were tardy/late to school at least one time from 2005-2007.
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2. A 400% increase in the percentage of students participating in the Senior Project Experience.

Baseline: Year: 2006-2007

- From 2006-2007, a total of 26 students participated in the Senior Project Experience.
- An Average of 13 students participated in the Senior Project Experience

3. A 20% reduction in the percent of students being suspended from school.

Baseline: Year: 2005-2007

- Total enrollment during 2005-2007 was 4349 students
- 358 students were suspended during 2005-2007
- 8.2% of the student body from 2005-2007 were suspended from school

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.

It is imperative that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School develop more comprehensive action plans that contain all of the components required by the Middle States Association. In addition, a process needs to be put into place that ensures that the plans will be reviewed annually and revised to meet the changing needs of the school. At the time of the Mid-Point Review, the evaluator will be expected to review these revised action plans to ensure that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School has put in place the necessary activities and resources to fully meet its objectives.

STANDARDS OF THE MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School gathered information regarding how well the school meets the Middle States standards by distributing the standards survey provided by Middle States to representatives of stakeholder groups including subcommittees of faculty members, parents and students. The Validation Team found that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School is in continued compliance with the standards set forth for accredited members of the Middle States Association with the exception of the standard on Planning. The Validation Team found an exemplary staff, a supportive administration, a Board that provides resources to support the school program, and a broad array of educational programs and student activities.

Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives – *The institution has clearly written statements of philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives that convey the general and specific purposes of the educational programs and that express expectations for quality. Stakeholders, including staff, parents, and governing body members, understand, accept, and give input into the development of the organization’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. These documents are appropriate for the groups served and are reviewed periodically.*

The Philosophy, Mission, Beliefs, and/or Objectives standard is met.

The philosophy, mission and belief statements that were already a part of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School ethos are still appropriate and relevant to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Community. The mission of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School to “educate every student to become a confident and caring life-long learner who can communicate and contribute positively to the rapidly changing world” is indeed a worthwhile and commendable endeavor. The belief statements reflect a level of care and commitment to the school’s mission and are also commendable.

The *Accreditation for Growth* process requires schools to have 2-4 measurable student performance objectives. Scotch Plans-Fanwood High School has developed 2 objectives that meet all Middle States criteria for *AFG* objectives. These objectives address both an increase in standardized test scores as well as an increase in school interest and engagement.

It was generally unanimous among the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School community that it is a worthwhile endeavor to raise standardized test scores. However, there was also the desire to also address some areas that are tougher to tackle like increased interest and engagement in school and learning. The Validation Team agrees wholeheartedly in this desire and believe that a focus beyond standardized test measures is mandated by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School mission when it describes its aim as educating students to be “confident and caring” who can contribute positively to the rapidly changing world”.

Governance and Leadership – *The governance and administration work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the organization through the establishment of policy and oversight of leadership. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. The administration of the organization provides a productive work environment, timely and open communication, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the institution. The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority, which operates in the public interest.*

The Governance and Leadership standard is met.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District is led by a Board of Education, a superintendent of schools, and several assistant superintendents. All entities work cooperatively together to establish long range strategic planning goals. Through conversations with Board members, the superintendent and Scotch Plains Fanwood High School administration, it is evident that the focus of these goals is on serving the needs of all students. Clearly formulated written policies and procedures exist that are fair and equitable to all.

A principal and four assistant principals lead Scotch Plains Fanwood High School. The students, staff and parents continually cited these individuals as solid, effective leaders and an integral part of the educational program. School administration acts fairly and consistently in dealings with parents and students of the Scotch Plains Fanwood High School community. Both parent and student groups expressed positive comments concerning the governance and leadership. The principal and his staff were commended for their competence.

Shared decision-making at all levels was repeatedly highlighted as an asset within the district. Parents and students are represented on the district's Curriculum Committee. Students were knowledgeable of the reason for their participation and input to the committee. Students spoke candidly to the Validation Team about the strengths of the educational programs as well as issues of concern. We recommend that Scotch Plains Fanwood High School insure continued student representation on committees as a means of deriving input from this critical source. Regular meetings between the Student Government Association and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School administration with published agendas and a record of the minutes of the meetings will strengthen the students' understanding of the important role that they play.

Organizational Design and Staff – *The organizational structure of the institution provides the vehicle for carrying out the established philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the educational program and support services. A clearly defined set of reporting relationships exists and administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent and sufficient in number to allow the effective delivery of quality education to students. Staff assessment procedures are in place, are clear to all involved, and are collaborative. On-going professional development, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and collegial relationships among staff and administration are evident and conducive to cooperative action.*

The Organizational Design and Staff standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District has a clearly defined organizational structure. Well qualified leaders provide coordination and direction for educational programs and ancillary services. District and school leaders work cooperatively toward the attainment of the goals defined by their mission.

The Superintendent of Schools is in her second year in that position after having served as an Assistant Superintendent for the previous four years. As a new round of strategic planning has begun, the superintendent has indicated three major areas of focus for the next strategic planning cycle. These goals represent her vision based on input of various stakeholder groups. Areas of focus are in compliance with No Child Left Behind, the improvement of facilities and the upgrading of technology, and finally, security and emergency preparedness.

The Principal has served in this position for the past nine years. A clearly defined list of delegated duties is readily available to the assistant principals. Discipline is handled by each of the assistant principals. The remainder of the duties is assigned based on experience. With the retirement of one of the assistant principals at the end of the year, the Principal has already addressed the challenge of filling his position.

Educational Programs – *The educational programs consist of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs that include appropriate standards, solid instructional pedagogy, and appropriate assessment based on research and best practices. The educational programs are sufficiently financed, periodically reviewed, and mission-appropriate. They are developed to meet and address the needs of students and are designed to produce student learning at all levels. Effective policies and practices are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained.*

The Educational Programs standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School is a four-year comprehensive school with a strong college preparatory program serving a wide range of students. Consideration is given to the ages and varying levels of ability of students, and the instructional program is designed to meet students' needs. The school offers a variety programs which include college level Advanced Placement classes, Honors level classes and inclusion of students identified as needing specially designed instruction. The graduation rate of the Class of 2007 was 100%.

Educational programs are aligned with state, local, and district requirement. Students are required to complete 120 credits in their four years in order to graduate. Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School requirements include four years of English, three years of math, science and social studies, two years of world languages, one credit year of physical education for each year of enrollment, one credit year of practical arts, one credit year of visual and performing arts and technology integrated throughout the curriculum. A large number of elective courses are offered that include industrial and technical education, music and various arts. Elective courses such as TV News/Broadcast Journalism, Photography, Yearbook, Television Arts make effective use of the technology. The school also has mobile carts that can be used in the classrooms. Lab Quests, Survey Monkey, MS Office products for lab reporting are some of the tools utilized by various

departments. www.mygradebook.com and www.teacherweb.com are extensively used by the teachers.

Participation in the educational programs as well as extra-curricular activities offers opportunities for the development of social skills in interaction with adults and peers in the form of various clubs and organizations.

Learning Media Services and Technology – *Learning media services and technology function as important tools to enhance classroom instruction and other school activities as grade level appropriate. Well-organized information resources reinforce knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in other program areas and broaden minds by providing opportunities to conduct research and interact with information.*

The Learning Media Services and Technology standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's information resources and technology are of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to support the total educational program and encourage students and staff to broaden and extend their learning. Three computer labs and carts containing laptops are for available for each department throughout the school to be shared by classroom teachers. Research skills are a part of the junior and senior year language arts curriculum. The Media Center comprises the largest quiet study area in the school. The prime function is to supplement and enrich the curriculum through the use of a variety of media. A freshman orientation on the use of the learning media services, its resources, and equipment is provided to students during their Language Arts class and from that point, one-on-one assistance is available, as needed. A special citation class is available to any group that requests help in that area.

The availability of technology to teachers, staff and students has greatly increased in the last five years. Faculty and students have also embraced technology as a tool to enhance classroom instruction. The department heads were excited to share the various technology methods and tools they were using from basic Microsoft Office programs to Lab Quest, Vernier Temperature Probe Systems, Tablet PC's, graphic calculators on PC's and teacher blogs and web pages. Concern was expressed that more technology support staff were needed in the district, although the high school benefits from the tech department being housed in their building. Recent improvements in the Media Center include a security system installed that has dramatically decreased loses in inventory. There are 18 computers available in the Media Center for student research and class use. A separate room is available for classes to use during research projects within the center. There are 5 catalog computers designated for that use only. The school provides an annual budget for technology and learning media, which has furnished the resources for a high quality academic program.

Resource materials and technology are maintained in a manner that makes them organized, attractive and in good working condition. They are properly catalogued and housed. Purging of materials is completed on a regular basis to ensure that the entire collection is relevant, current, and up-to-date.

Student Services – *The school provides services to students that optimize their preparation for learning. Chief among these services are health services and, at appropriate levels, guidance including academic and personal counseling. Preventive and emergency health care services are provided and health and safety policies are clear and well understood. Other services that may be provided include transportation, food service, services for special needs students, and admissions and placement.*

The Student Services standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School provides guidance and counseling services which are sensitive to the academic as well as the emotional and social needs of their students. Students and parents praised the guidance staff, which consists of five full time guidance counselors, one part time counselor, and an assistant principal who oversees the department. In addition to the counselors, administrators, teachers, and/or other staff share responsibilities for providing guidance and support to students.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School reported that 93 percent of the graduates of the Class of 2007 were pursuing further education. Accordingly, all students are counseled in identifying and choosing appropriate paths for achieving their future success. Career awareness is provided in form of guest lectures, college night and consultants from various walks of life.

Guidance services are well organized and complement the goals and objectives of the school. Student data is current, and readily available for use by the staff. However, the Validation Team has a concern regarding the counselor-to-student ratio at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Student case loads for the counselors average from 275 to 300. The American School Counselor Association recommends a counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. The Validation team recommends that the school and the district take a closer look at this situation and analyze the effectiveness of reducing the number of students assigned to each counselor.

Student Life and Student Activities – *A healthy atmosphere exists for all students. At all levels, non-discriminatory, appropriate student activities that supplement classroom experiences or community life are provided. An appropriate student activities program fosters a positive intellectual, cultural, and social climate, promotes growth in student leadership and social interaction skills, and encourages students' special interests.*

The Student Life and Student Activities standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School maintains a desirable balance between academic, social, co-curricular, and service activities. These activities supplement the regular classroom instruction, and contribute to the academic, physical, and social development of students. Staff members who moderate student activities are suitably qualified and provide appropriate supervision to students. Staff members demonstrate respect, fairness, and understanding for their students.

Music, dance, theater and art flourish at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. A variety of sports activities is available at both the varsity and junior varsity level. The literary magazine, school newspaper, National Honor Society, various language clubs, Fashion Club, Fed Challenge, Math

League, Model UN, Junior Statesman Association, NJ Science League, SMAC and Student Government Association are among the other offerings for students who wish to become more active in their school community.

Strong evidence exists that students, staff, parents and community offer input to the school's student life activities. Communication about activities in the school is available through many sources such as the school website, PTA Matters, the school calendar, cable TV and other sources.

Facilities – *The school facilities, consisting of the site, building(s), and equipment, provide a safe, well-maintained physical environment that supports optimal student development and achievement. The school facilities are appropriate to implement the stated philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives of the school.*

The Facilities standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School was built in 1957. In 1968, a major addition was added on the high school's 29 acre tract. By May 1970, a new addition was opened which included a Media Center, science area, Multi-Purpose Room and auto shop. Presently the entire facility is capable of serving 2000 students.

The grounds, buildings, furnishings, and equipment of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School are sufficiently maintained. A bond issue is currently providing for the installation new turf sod fields for the football and soccer teams. The plant facility is more than adequate for the 1500 enrolled students. Hallways are large and clean. Classrooms are well lit and ventilated. Entrance into the building is accessible to the handicapped. There are two maintenance shifts with approximately 15-20 personnel each. There are two maintenance personnel assigned to the over-night shift.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School administration acknowledges the facilities could be improved to positively impact the education offered to its students.

Health and Safety – *A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. Both preventive and emergency health and safety procedures are clear and well documented. The school environment is productive and orderly.*

The Health and Safety standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School has written procedures in place to prepare students and staff to respond effectively to emergency situations. Emergency drills are conducted with specific plans for evacuation, shelter in place and a wide variety of other emergency circumstances that involve a specific chain of command. A Crisis Response Team composed of administrators is in place at the high school to meet and handle situations that warrant their attention. Team members have received professional development training at the district level. A Crisis Response Clipboard is available as a quick reference guide for administrators and various safety plans are in place in the staff manual as well.

The Validation Team applauds the school's leadership for its attention to school safety and recommends continued appropriate staff development in this area through practices and professional training.

One full-time and two half-time nurses are scheduled on duty to provide health care during the school day. One full-time athletic trainer is available for after-school activities. There is appropriate coordination between the nurses and the trainer. While there are no defibrillators in the school, police and fire departments with EMT training are available in the immediate area. Emergency assistance is available to the school with 911 services.

There is a 3 person security staff at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School campus with cameras at the entrances. Available staff members act as hall monitors throughout the day.

Finances – *Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. The business practices of the institution promote confidence in the organization's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and to follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes must be dedicated to school operations.*

The Finances standard is met.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District appears to have sufficient resources to provide the educational opportunities described in the district goals, the building goals, and the AFG objectives. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School budget is a needs/zero-based budget. The budget process begins in October of each fiscal year. Recommendations for new initiatives are made to the Principal, who collaborates with the Assistant Superintendent for Finance. Priorities are established and funded accordingly. A separate funding line is provided to the Curriculum Supervisors. In collaboration with the Principal, decisions are made on initiatives and efforts to provide services and to improve student performance.

Assessment of Student Learning – *The assessment of student learning outcomes enables students to monitor their own learning progress and allows teachers to adapt their instruction to the specific learning needs of students. The school's effectiveness is assessed by examining areas such as student learning and performance, program evaluation, performance results for support services, graduate success, and client satisfaction. Results are used to develop strategies for improving service and program quality. Assessment results are communicated appropriately to parents/guardians, students, staff, and school community.*

The Assessment of Student Learning standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School employs a variety of methods to assess student learning. New Jersey State proficiency assessments in the areas of English, math, and science (HSPA) are required for graduation and given to 11th graders. In addition, the high school utilizes both traditional and non-traditional assessment tools. More importantly, the school analyzes the

assessment data to modify and improve curriculum. Study Island was implemented this year as a pre-assessment technology tool that shows promise in improving student skills with independent on-line practice. Several teachers have also received professional training based on ‘Keeping Learning on Tract’ formative assessments and subsequently have shared their new knowledge with their colleagues.

Student progress at all levels is regularly evaluated, interpreted, and reported in an understandable format, fulfilling responsibilities to the community and state and federal mandates. Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School effectively utilizes this assessment information to improve curriculum and student outcomes. Current goals and objectives involve increasing HSPA percentages to higher levels of proficiency and working to improve SAT writing skills, which indicate the school’s interest in prioritizing the use of current assessment results to develop strategies for improving program quality.

The Validation Team commends the employment of new technology by teachers to record students’ assessment data into CS1 Smarts, the district’s information system. This will support future efforts to use data to refine instructional practices. The Validation Team suggests that appropriate staff development be offered to all faculty members so this new technology may be utilized consistently throughout Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Planning – *The school makes use of strategic, long-range, and operational planning to continuously improve its educational programs and services. Improvement plans focus on student performance and organizational growth and engender continuous improvement across all aspects of the school organization. Externally validated processes for evaluation, strategic planning, and school/district improvement are continuously maintained. Systematic analysis regarding student performance and organizational growth is coupled with analyses of instructional and organizational practices to ensure alignment with the school’s philosophy, mission, beliefs, and/or objectives. Trends in outcomes and results are projected and goals of demonstrated strategic merit are identified.*

The Planning standard is met.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District has a written strategic plan which is available to the school community and is approved by the governance. With the beginning of a new district strategic planning cycle, district goals have been established to improve educational programs, to update facilities and technology and to improve safety and emergency preparedness. By means of a district level Curriculum Committee, school leadership and staff plan, organize, manage and support an ongoing school improvement.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School provides opportunities for representative elements of the community to offer input into the educational planning through parent and student representation on the Curriculum Committee. The major focus of the school improvement plan is to enhanced student achievement and performance. Data-driven decision-making enables school administration to make critical judgments in these areas. Periodic review of school improvement plans is conducted to determine the extent to which outcomes meet expectations and so that corrective actions can be initiated.

The Validation Team urges that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School institutionalize a formal Planning Team and designate an Internal Coordinator to ensure that the AFG objectives remain an area of focus. In addition, detailed action plans must be created to delineate the steps needed, resources required and persons responsible to attain its goals.

ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

As a Validation Team we are asked to make an accreditation recommendation to the Commission on Secondary Schools at the conclusion of our visit. Our five-person team has unanimously concluded that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School:

- 1) Has achieved some but not all of its *AFG* objectives during the seven-year accreditation period;
- 2) Continues to have in place a dynamic, ongoing planning process;
- 3) Continues to meet the Middle States Standards for Accreditation; and
- 4) Has grown organizationally in its ability to organize and plan continuously for improving its students' performance.

In addition, the Validation Team believes that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School has shown evidence that it continues to meet the following *Accreditation for Growth* parameters:

- **A Focus on Student Performance and Growth**
There is a focus on student performance, and school improvement efforts are aimed at student learning, student performance, and student results.
- **A Culture of Accountability in Student Performance**
The objectives are measurable, there is a viable internal monitoring process, and an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the action plans has been developed.
- **A Planning Ethic**
The school is engaged in a continuous clarification of its unique mission, beliefs, and expected student performance objectives. The school is action-oriented as shown by the development of long-term strategic action plans that integrate program, services, facilities, and support to address growth needs.
- **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**
The school is 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 is a climate of inclusiveness and evidence exists of the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the planning process.

The Validation Team will make the following recommendation to the Commission on Secondary Schools regarding the accreditation of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School: Accreditation for Seven Years.

The Validation Team again emphatically urges Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School to address the required components of the *Accreditation for Growth* protocol necessary prior to the visit of the Mid-Point Reviewer.

CONCLUSION

The Validation Team would like to express sincere appreciation to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School community for its genuine kindness and hospitality. Each team member left Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School with fond memories after having had a full and rich experience.

The Validation Team would like to congratulate Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School for its strong organizational structure and its excellent leadership. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School administration have created well planned educational programs and activities to address the spectrum of educational needs and extra-curricular interests of their students. The Validation Team found educators who truly believe in their mission to “to educate every student to become a confident and caring life-long learner who can communicate and contribute positively to the rapidly changing world” and “to provide an academic environment which values excellence, initiative, and diversity.” The Validation Team commends Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School for including varying stakeholders, such as parents and students, as part of their shared decision-making process.

As stated previously, the Validation Team implores the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School community to institutionalize a formal planning team, led by an internal coordinator, to ensure that its varying stakeholders focus specifically on its *AFG* objectives. In addition, this planning team must work to develop thorough and comprehensive action plans for these objectives. The action plans should delineate an extensive variety of activity steps to be accomplished over the next seven years which designate the person(s) responsible and the resources needed to complete each step. The Mid-point Reviewer will be expected to evaluate these action plans and to make additional suggestions if necessary.

While Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School offers a safe educational environment, issues with the facilities need to be addressed. The roof seems to be an ongoing concern of many of the stakeholders. This, along with other issues with the facilities such as the restrooms, science labs and heating, need to be prioritized and addressed in a timely manner.

The Validation Team believes that Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School has an extraordinary faculty under the leadership of dedicated administrators. Working together toward its objectives, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School community has the capacity and the drive to achieve its objectives and to further improve its fine educational programs.