



# The Taft School

William R. MacMullen '78  
*Headmaster*

October 16, 2015

Ms. Kathleen C. Giles  
Head of School  
Middlesex School  
1400 Lowell Road  
Concord, MA 01742

Dear Kathy,

I include here a copy of the Visiting Committee report. The Committee worked very hard on it, and I hope it is accurate as well as helpful. You should do a quick read to ensure that there are no factual errors; and of course, if there is anything that feels seriously wrong, you should let me know. Assuming it reads well, I would tell Bill Bennett to accept the report from the portal.

I felt privileged to be part of this, and I hope the report shows the admiration we have for the school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Willy", with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

WRM/has



VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT  
for

# Middlesex School

Concord, MA

**Mrs. Kathleen Giles**

*Head of School*

Middlesex School

PO Box 9122

Concord, MA 01742

**Mr. Kenneth Risley**

*Self-Study Coordinator*

*History Teacher / Chair of Steering Committee*

Middlesex School

PO Box 9122

Concord, MA 01742

**Mr. William MacMullen**

*Chair*

*Headmaster*

Taft School

110 Woodbury Road

Watertown, CT 06795

**Mr. Brian Easler**

*Assistant Chair*

*Head of School*

Wilbraham & Monson Academy

423 Main Street

Wilbraham, MA 01095

**10/04/2015 - 10/07/2015**

# Roster of Team Members

---

## Chair

**Mr. William MacMullen**  
Taft School  
110 Woodbury Road  
Watertown, CT 06795  
(860) 945-7877  
MacMullenW@taftschool.org

## Assistant Chair

**Mr. Brian Easler**  
Wilbraham & Monson Academy  
423 Main Street  
Wilbraham, MA 01095  
(413) 596-6811  
beasler@WMA.us

## VC Members

**Mr. Raja Bala**  
Cushing Academy  
PO Box 8000  
Ashburnham, MA 01430-8000  
(978) 827-7000  
rbala@cushing.org

**Mr. Robert Dowling**  
Avon Old Farms School  
500 Old Farms Road  
Avon, CT 06001  
(860) 404-4100  
dowlingr@avonoldfarms.com

**Dr. Verena Drake**  
The Hotchkiss School  
11 Interlaken Road  
Lakeville, CT 06039-2141  
(860) 435-2591  
vdrake@hotchkiss.org

**Ms. Elise London**  
St. Mark's School  
25 Marlboro Road  
Southborough, MA 01772  
(508) 786-6000

eliselondon@stmarksschool.org

**Mr. Chapin Miller**

The Gunnery  
99 Green Hill Road  
Washington, CT 06793  
(860) 868-7334  
millerc@gunnery.org

**Ms. Janice Pedrin-Nielson**

Holderness School  
1 Chapel Lane  
Plymouth, NH 03264  
(603) 536-1257  
jnielson@holderness.org

**Mr. Charles Thompson**

Taft School  
110 Woodbury Road  
Watertown, CT 06795  
(860) 945-7777  
cthompson@taftschool.org

**Ms. Kathleen Wallace**

Choate Rosemary Hall  
333 Christian Street  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
(203) 697-2000  
kwallace@choate.edu

# NEASC Introduction

---

Founded in 1885, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) is the nation's oldest accrediting agency. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has awarded accreditation to educational institutions in the six New England states that seek voluntary affiliation.

The governing body of NEASC is its Board of Trustees which oversees the work of four Commissions:

- Commission on International Education
- Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- Commission on Independent Schools
- Commission on Public Schools

The evaluation program which the schools undergo is a three-fold process: the self-study conducted by the school, the evaluation by the visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study (Part II), and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and the Commission. The Commission on Independent Schools oversees the entire process.

Each school is evaluated in terms of compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*, the quality of *Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion*, and how well it is serving the needs of its students. Because each school is different, the base that undergirds the evaluation is the school's own statement of mission and core values.

# School Data Sheet

---

## Mission

Middlesex School is an independent, non-denominational, residential, college-preparatory school that, for over one hundred years, has been committed to excellence in the intellectual, ethical, creative, and physical development of young people. We honor the ideal, articulated by our founding Headmaster, of “finding the promise” in every student, and we work together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and shared responsibility to help students bring their talents to fruition as knowledgeable, capable, responsible and moral citizens of the world. As a community, we respect the individual interests, strengths, and needs of each student. We also value the rich diversity of belief and experience each of us brings to the School. We expect that each student will bring his or her best efforts to the shared endeavor of learning and that the School, through its faculty, will engage and encourage each student's growth, happiness, and well-being. We aspire for all Middlesex students to develop personal integrity, intellectual vitality and discipline, and respect for themselves and for others. We expect each student to engage energetically and cooperatively in the life of the School, and we seek to inspire in all students the desire to seek understanding of themselves and the larger world, both now and in their futures.

## History and Culture

Middlesex School is a nonsectarian, coeducational preparatory school founded by Frederick Winsor in 1901. From the start, Winsor's mission was to “find the promise that lies hidden” in every student, and that message of individuality, hope, and possibility guides us today. Middlesex, both in the present and in the past, has preferred capacity in many areas to specialization in one. The Middlesex campus is located 2.5 miles from Concord center on 350 acres of land, which includes woodlands and Bateman Pond. Our campus, designed by the Olmsted Brothers firm, remains centered on its iconic circle. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful setting that naturally brings our paths and our lives together.

Frederick Winsor wanted the school he founded in 1901 to be distinct from the boarding schools of the time, and from its beginnings, Middlesex School has occupied a unique place in the independent school landscape. Within 15 years, eight buildings had been constructed including Ware Hall, Eliot Hall, a gymnasium, and four dormitories. From its inception, Frederick Winsor envisioned a school that encompassed the multifaceted lives of its students. It is a non-sectarian school with a positive sense of tradition and mission. It is a school with small-school intimacy and big-school opportunity; a school that has sought students from every part of the country through a National Scholarship Program, begun in 1934. As of 1942, Middlesex began accepting a limited number of day students, and in 1945 Memorial Chapel was rededicated to honor the 43 Middlesex graduates who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

The School evolved significantly after the Second World War and, in the late 1960s, Middlesex dropped grades 7 and 8. The first African-American students began attending Middlesex in the late 1960s as well. The School became coeducational in 1974 and generally enrolls an equal number of boys and girls. As it has grown, Middlesex has broadened its national and international reach while always benefiting from its local surroundings—the human and cultural capital of the Boston/Cambridge area.

Middlesex was originally designed to accommodate 30 to 140 boys. However, under the second Head of School, Lawrence Terry, it grew in size. The resulting strain on facilities, together with the need for better faculty housing, teaching facilities, and faculty salaries, led Trustees and faculty to create a long-range plan. In 1964, David F. Sheldon became the third Head of School, and led the School through significant growth in size. By 1967, the School enrolled almost 190 boarders and 12 to 13 day students. In the late 1960s, under the largest financial campaign to that point in its history, the School began major construction projects to build a new dormitory, a library, a science center, and a theatre/arts facility. Renovations to Ware Hall and the construction of a meetinghouse for faculty and students were also completed in the 1970s. A successful capital drive in the 1980s supported the expansion and major renovation of the gymnasium, including the addition of a wrestling room, dance studio, and squash courts.

Dr. Deirdre A. Ling became the fourth Head of School in June of 1990. In the early 1990s significant gifts expanded and improved the athletic complex, including the Landry Center and the Atkins Athletic Center. Also in the early 1990s, a new dormitory, Kravis House, was built on the site of the old social center, and Ware Hall underwent major renovations to incorporate a new social center, health center, and larger dining facilities. A technology initiative in 1996 linked all major school buildings with a fiber-optic network, providing communication accessibility in all buildings on campus. All students gained access to a campus-wide email system and the Internet from their dormitory rooms. Wireless Internet access was then established in the academic buildings first, and then to other areas on campus, including dormitories. In addition, a technology center in Eliot Hall and a computer lab in the Warburg Library were added to offer computer access to all members of the community. In the late 1990s, two older dorms underwent major renovations in order to provide better living facilities for students and faculty. During the same period, construction of faculty housing on newly developed Oates Lane provided much-needed, on-campus housing for five faculty families.

The Campaign of a Century, the School's capital drive for its centennial celebration, brought about another surge of construction projects to provide 21st century Middlesex students with an optimal environment for educational excellence in academics, athletics, the arts, and residential living. A new dormitory, Atkins House, and a new residence for the Head of School were completed not long after the turn of the century. In addition, another of the original campus buildings, Higginson House, was completely renovated in 2001. The athletic center was updated with the addition of six new squash courts, and a major renovation to the Pratt Hockey Rink, providing four indoor tennis courts for use in the spring season. The Clay Centennial Center, completed in 2003, opened as a state-of-the-art science and math center. This building added an observatory telescope, classrooms and laboratories for biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as five new mathematics classrooms to the School's academic resources. The Campaign of a Century also increased the School's endowment to support faculty salaries and benefits, student financial aid, and other projects and initiatives. After 13 years of dedicated service to the School, Deirdre Lang retired as Head of School.

In the summer of 2003, Kathleen Carroll Giles was welcomed as the fifth Head of Middlesex School. Now a dozen years into her tenure as Head of School, Kathy Giles has brought significant growth and positive change to Middlesex. The School has steadily grown its endowment in the wake of the 2008 recession to \$215M and other long-term investments. In 2008, the East Fields, a set of multi-functional field turf surfaces, were dedicated to complement the adjoining tennis complex built in 2005. Faculty housing was significantly increased with the addition of five new residences directly across from the School's main entrance on Lowell Road. In the summer of 2011, the Mary Mae Foundation identified Middlesex as a candidate for a grant for faculty housing. Upon receipt of Middlesex's application, the Mary Mae Foundation granted Middlesex \$500,000 to help fund a new complex of five faculty houses, the "Mary Mae Village," which were completed in the summer of 2013. Recent major renovations include the Terry Room and Senior Plaques, girls' and boys' locker room spaces, Robert Winsor and LeBaron-Briggs dormitories, the restoration of the Orr Gymnasium exterior, and a restoration of the Paine Barn and relocation of the Facilities and Operations teams to that location- all occurring between 2013 and 2014.

The present enrollment is 385; with 193 boys and 192 girls in grades nine through twelve, and 95 students in the senior class. The 260 boarding students, comprising 67% of the student body, represent 26 states and 20 foreign countries. The vast majority of students enter Middlesex in either the ninth or tenth grade. There are 64 teaching faculty, 45 of which have earned graduate degrees. Classes are conducted six days a week, and the average section size is 12.

The faculty houses on campus are welcoming places, where students frequently meet to talk with their advisors, teachers, and coaches about a variety of subjects that extend beyond the classroom, whether intellectual, social, or personal. Academic expertise, commitment, and eternal energy, however, only partly define the faculty at Middlesex. Their commitment to the development of knowledgeable, capable, responsible, and ethical teenagers yields the greatest reward, and is the true reason they've dedicated their lives to Middlesex. The School's facilities provide the physical framework that helps to foster our cherished sense of community. This sense of community is evident in many places throughout campus such as the theater, the Chapel, the Student Center, in the dormitories, the classrooms, and on the athletic fields.

While its buildings and enrollment have changed significantly over the years, many traditions of the School endure. The goal to "find the promise," articulated by the founding Head of School continues to hold true over a century later in our academic, athletic, artistic, co-curricular, and residential life programs. The circular layout of the campus continues to reflect the unity of the community and the School's continued commitment to principles of balance in the lives of its students and faculty. Beginning with the first graduating class in 1905, wooden plaques carved by each graduating senior have been used to adorn

the halls of the School's main buildings, forming a tangible and permanent link with many generations of Middlesex students. Small classes and personal interactions between faculty and students continue to provide the intimacy and energy for which Middlesex School is known. The School has evolved in many ways over the past century. It has undergone renovation, conservation, expansion, and constant transition in person and place, yet the buildings, fields, programs, and ethos still foster collegiality and close contact. Despite the school's continuous transformation, the mission, with our students at the center, remains the same.

Person(s) completing this form: Kenneth A. Risley Date: 5/13/2015

## **Process Followed by School**

For a detailed review of the Accreditation Process, please refer to Standard 15.a. on page 146 of the Self-Study.

## **Overview of School Findings**

All of the major findings, conclusions, strengths, and recommendations are detailed in Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion.



# Introduction

---

## Thanks to School

The Visiting Committee felt, throughout the visit, an extraordinary sense of gratitude--for a school which hosted us with remarkable grace, warmth and caring. Our hope as a committee was to honor the hard work of the school, to assure its quality, and to help it improve. It was clear that the school approached the self-study and accreditation process with real commitment. It was equally clear that Middlesex was well-prepared for the Visiting Committee. Much credit goes to the chair of the Steering Committee, who, by all accounts, led superbly, and also to the steering committee itself, a group of talented and passionate faculty. During the visit, the visiting committee felt that every detail was considered: schedule, meals, meetings, publications, refreshments, and so on. Most of all, the spirit was inviting, gracious and engaging. One member noted, "I have been on many of these visits--this was the best I have seen."

## Overview of Team Findings

The Visiting Committee hesitates to try to offer a brief overview of a massive self-study and over three days of visits, observations, conversations and interviews; but if pressed, the Committee would offer the following:

We were hosted with extraordinary graciousness.

We became briefly part of a campus culture marked by warmth, friendliness and happiness.

We saw motivated and happy students who were thriving.

We saw gifted and caring faculty who knew their students well.

We saw very strong leadership: a wonderfully engaged board of trustees, an exceptional school head, and a wise and experienced administrative team.

We saw a lovely campus, maintained and improving under an ethos of responsible stewardship.

We saw a rich array of curricular and co-curricular offerings.

We saw an ongoing and successful engagement with the alumni family.

We saw a school with ample resources--if also one committed to deepening them.

We saw a school true to its mission and living out that mission every day.

# Standard 1: Mission

---

## Standard

There is congruence between the school's stated mission and core values and its actual program, policies, planning, and decision-making at both the operational and governance levels.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*The committee feels strongly that the current iteration of the stated mission and core values of the School reflect the planning, policies, decision-making, and implementation of the actual program, and so has voted a P1 for this standard. The various surveys demonstrate that a strong collective sense of the School's mission is shared across the various constituencies of the Middlesex community. The mission has been reviewed regularly since its latest revision in 2005, and the committee feels strongly that the School is consistently engaged in finding ways to enrich its implementation within the program.*

## Observations

Among the NEASC Visiting Committee, there was an enthusiastic and shared belief that Middlesex has a keen sense of mission--and that the mission is being lived out each day, and in many and beautiful ways. Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate how impressed the committee was with the articulation of the message, how pervasively it was experienced, and how thoroughly it was embraced, by all stakeholders.

It was clear that the paragraph-length mission statement effectively guides policy and practice, but it was the phrase "finding the promise" which seemed most powerful, a kind of Morse code or haiku which everyone knew, could quote, and believed in--and spoke to and about without any of the self-consciousness, irony or embarrassment one can witness at some institutions. When the Head of School spoke about the school's essence, she fluently articulated the mission, and aiming at

very different audiences. When parents were asked about what made the school unique, several pointed to these words. When a student was asked whether "finding the promise" meant anything, he or she could point to conversations with advisors, counselors, dorm faculty, coaches and others, each of whom had engaged in meaningful conversations about the idea. When a faculty member was asked about mission, he or she instinctively spoke of what "finding the promise" meant--and this was equally true of the rookie or veteran. (Not surprisingly, at a talk by a teacher at Chapel, the phrase was seamlessly woven into the conclusion of the talk.) Trustees, too, were committed to the premise, as were leaders in alumni relations and admissions--both working with vital external stakeholder groups. While schools often avoid corporate jargon, one member remarked, "Great companies kill to have such effective slogans." Those three words captured much, from high altitude strategic planning to a ground level dormitory meeting.

Interestingly and importantly, in some ways it was the fact that the phrase had some dust on it that made it so effective: Middlesex has cleaved to the mission, and this powerful theme, since its founding in 1901. There was considerable pride at the school that the mission has remained fixed, even with regular examination, and that finding the promise mattered today and was as urgently relevant in the 21st century as it was over a century ago.

To be clear and to give due credit, it is not simply that there is an enthusiastic and harmonious chorus striking the same mission tune: it is that the mission is clearly part of the policies and practices of the school. Conversations about dormitory practices and traditions, school policy on participation in arts and athletics, guidance by advisors and counselors on course sign-up and college applications, philosophy in admissions, messaging in the capital campaign--these and other areas all show evidence of the mission at work.

Importantly, this adherence to historic mission is not to say the school is somehow "stuck in the past." Indeed, there was a sentiment that Middlesex was innovative and forward-thinking, not despite the mission but because of it. As the self-study concluded, "Despite the school's continuous transformation, the mission, with our students at the center, remains the same."

Not every school has as enduring, powerful and beloved a mission, and certainly few with a phrase as cogent and concise and as fully embraced.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The Visiting Committee gave the school a P1 rating.

## **Commendations**

The Visiting Committee commends the School for its cogent, clear and concise articulation of its mission and its extraordinary commitment to living out that mission in intentional and pervasive ways.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee has no recommendations.

# Standard 2: Governance

---

## Standard

The school has an appropriate system of governance that assures that the school remains true to its mission and that it has the necessary resources to support its present and prospective operations.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*Middlesex enjoys a committed, enthusiastic, engaged, and effective Board of Trustees. The Board provides strong financial management, supports a clear chain of command, and demonstrates an abiding commitment to the School's mission. The Governance/Standard 2 self-study committee feels that Middlesex meets all suggested indicators.*

### *Overview*

*A Board of Trustees governs the Middlesex School. Under the School's by-laws, adopted in 1901 and amended as recently as 2012, the Board is charged with the "maintenance and operation" of the School as an institution of learning, while the Head of School is responsible for the "internal government" of the School.*

*According to the by-laws, there are four categories of Trustees: five-year, three-year, pro tem (term expires when he/she vacates the position of Head of School, Chair of Parents' Committee, or President of Alumni Association), and emeritus (former Heads and former Presidents). There are 35 voting members of the Board. New Trustees are voted in by affirmative vote of a majority of the Board.*

*The Board is comprised of thirteen committees, each with a chair and vice-chair: Executive; Buildings and Grounds; Alumni and Development; Finance and Budget; Investments; Learning, Teaching, and Community; Long-Range Planning; Marketing and Communication; Technology; Trustee and Governance; Compensation; Gift Acceptance; and Audit. The full Board meets three times per year on campus, while committee and sub-committee meetings may occur at other junctures throughout the year as needed. Finance and Budget, Building and Grounds, Investments, and Audit committees meet regularly (three times a year on average) outside of full board meetings.*

*The Board is quite visible to the School community. During their three annual meetings, typically held in September, January, and May, Trustees attend performances, watch athletic contests, visit classes with a student, and take their meals in the dining hall. It is clear to the Middlesex community that the Board is committed to the mission of the School.*

## Observations

Among the many things that are clearly visible at Middlesex is the abundance of competent leadership. The sound leadership is not just capable at their respective duties, but also deeply committed and sincerely enthusiastic for all things associated with the School's past, present, and future. Members of the Board consistently demonstrate this devotion and affection, and there is a rich appreciation for the leadership of the Board by all constituents the Visiting Committee encountered.

It is clear that the School is doing an effective job identifying appropriate leaders at the Board level. After speaking with a variety of people on campus, we learned that Board members are invited to join the Board for three main reasons: sincere devotion to the substance of the School's mission and the powerful impact that the successful execution of that mission has on campus and beyond; the ability of Board members to take a custodial position on the School's financial and overall health; and the willingness to share/deploy specific talents with the School in certain areas.

After individuals have been identified and officially welcomed onto the Board, there is a training program that seems to work. Board members are not only educated on the major details of this involvement, but also all Board members start by serving on the Finance and Budget Committee; this is appropriate because "financial oversight is the ultimate responsibility" of the Board. After serving on that committee, Board members are assigned to one of the other many committees. In short, the training and orientation program introduces new Board members to their primary function before advancing to other areas interest.

This training program positions Board members to understand fully the individual expectations and specific details. This point is critical, as it is evident to the Visiting Committee that this is a working Board, with active responsibilities vital to the maintenance of the School's health and development. Related, each Board member is expected to complete an annual self-evaluation to ensure that they are meeting expectations. In summary, Board members are carefully selected, appropriately educated on their responsibilities, sufficiently activated as leaders, and held accountable for their service.

The health of the Board is further illustrated by the smooth transition to a new president. In addition, there was no evidence of Board members extending their roles beyond governance and into operations. This point was emphasized many times in conversations with community members. The Board knows their role, is enthusiastically serving the school, and is respectful of their limits to affect internal governance (operations). This not only reflects a working culture of the Board, but also a sincere respect for the School's internal leadership.

Among the most important responsibilities of the Board is the support and evaluation of the Head of School. *The Board delegates to the Head of School the authority and responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the School, and the Head of School communicates effectively to the School community about institutional priorities set by the Board in consultation with the Head.* In turn, the President of the Board is in weekly communication with the Head and also conducts the Head's annual 360-degree evaluation.

## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Middlesex Board is providing effective governance for the School. They are talented, committed, and energetic. There is a structure in place to identify, train, activate, and assess members of the Board. This group is fully engaged, they know their role, and perform it very well; Middlesex is fortunate to have such a gifted and dedicated group of leaders. The Board seems to be comfortably working with the School's administration, faculty, student populations, and various other

constituencies. Because of this, and the many nuanced details of Board involvement, they are deserving of the P1 rating. The Visiting Committee enthusiastically validates the self-study related to governance.

## **Commendations**

*1. Middlesex enjoys a committed, enthusiastic, engaged, and effective Board of Trustees. The Board provides strong financial management, supports a clear chain of command, and demonstrates an abiding commitment to the School's mission.*

*2. The Board has done well to cultivate new Board members for active engagement in the work of the Board and to grow into leadership positions within the Board. It should continue to hone this practice, as Board leadership is imperative to the continued success of the School to deliver on its stated mission.*

3. The Board works diligently with the school on strategic planning, and is active in many projects. General examples of this include the January 2014 Strategic Priorities projects; a more specific example is the building activity on campus, which is being enhanced by the leadership and expertise of several Board members.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the Board continue to have honest conversations related to diversity, consider the ideal makeup of the board, and explore ways they might measure diversity.

## **Recommendation 2**

*The Board has begun to see the need for a more forward-looking approach beyond a five-year horizon, especially in regard to the long-term maintenance of facilities. The Visiting Committee recommends that the Board continue in this direction.*

# Standard 3: Enrollment

---

## Standard

The admissions process assures that those students who enroll are appropriate, given the school's mission, and are likely to benefit from their experience at the school.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*The school's admissions process is designed to attract, select, and enroll a class of talented and motivated students from a diversity of backgrounds. The Admissions Committee pays extra attention to qualities of character--specifically, the school's five core values: honesty, respect, kindness, gratitude, and courage--and evidence of the curiosity and confidence needed to actively engage with all aspects of our program.*

*Annual student attrition in the 1-2 percent range, a school-wide GPA of 87 percent during the 2013-14 year, thriving co-curricular programs in arts and athletics, and healthy college matriculation all suggest that the process yields students who are appropriate for our program.*

*Like most private schools, Middlesex continues to view affordability, and its resulting impact on enrollment and student-body composition, as a significant institutional challenge. Evaluation of students from diverse backgrounds and wide-ranging sending institutions recommends attention to non-traditional assessment tools with which we are increasingly fluent, in order to more wholly assess each applicant.*

## Observations

The Admission Office benefits from both print and online materials to communicate with potential families. These materials, which reflect the mission and values of the School, are attractive and appear to be comprehensive. They are also succinctly written, meeting the needs of today's youth who require a minimum number of clicks to find what they are looking for. Clearly the Admission Office benefits from sharing a faculty member with the Communications and Marketing Office. The Self-Study Report indicates that the *website could highlight the Advising Program more comprehensively*, and while the Visiting Committee heard no concerns expressed about this during the visit, we agree that the School should consider displaying more prominently this unique program of incredible strength.

The School's *student-centered approach to fulfilling the ambitious mission of "finding the promise" within each student* begins with the Admission Office, as manifest in the always thoughtful, occasionally innovative, and eminently effective internal procedures in place to recruit, interview, select, and admit 100 or so students each year with *a diversity of talents and backgrounds* and with the *common characteristics of intellectual curiosity, resilience, engagement, comfort around adults, independence, and leadership potential* necessary not only *to succeed in the rigors of the Middlesex curriculum but also to contribute positively to the other areas of athletics, arts, and community life*. The low annual student attrition, healthy school-wide GPA, robust co-curricular programs, and laudable college matriculation, on top of the gratitude students feel and joy they express at being members of such a vibrant educational community confirm that the Admission Office succeeds in filling the School with *mission-appropriate students*.

The Office does not stop there, however. They share with appropriate others--e.g., Academic Dean, Dean of Students, department heads, advisors, coaches--pertinent aspects of a student's profile with the goal of ensuring each student is known (Identified strengths and potential weaknesses) even before arriving on campus. After a student has matriculated, and aided and abetted by the School's admirable advisor program as well as the impressive amount of time spent in faculty meetings discussing each child in the School's care, the Admission professionals regularly consider how students, both new and returning, are faring and how that information should or could inform their work and processes going forward.

This good work of the Admission Office reaps benefits over time as well, as indicated by the (mostly) linear increase seen in some of the the statistics the Office tracks: total # of interviews, total # of applications, yield, etc. Since Fall 2009, these particular numbers have increased by 18%, 19%, and 7% respectively, supporting what was heard from several non-Admission Office faculty that "Middlesex is a hot school!" and "When we admit 100 students but can pick from 1300 applicants, we can't help but get students that are a good fit!"

Another benefit, one that is jumpstarted by the work of the Admission Office and built upon throughout a child's career at Middlesex, is the satisfaction of families with their children's Middlesex education as evidenced by the strong rate of parent giving to the Annual Fund. (Reported in the self-study: *Last year (2013-14), 90% of our parents donated to the annual fund, the second highest percentage within our peer group.*)

With all this said, the Visiting Committee recognizes that some tension exists over the need to enroll mission-appropriate students each year with *a diversity of talents* and the need to "fill certain buckets" such that athletic teams, for example, remain competitive. This tension is inevitable given the size of Middlesex and its desire, indeed its success, in doing so much so well with so few students as compared to those with whom it competes for students (a cross-over group that has changed positively in the last several years) and those with whom it competes in the ISL. We urge continued collaboration and conversation among those at the School who help the Admission Office craft each year's entering class of students.

Kudos to the Admission team!



## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

*The School is fully enrolled with mission-appropriate students, has the ability to thoroughly review each application, and engages in ongoing reflection and assessment of the admissions process and selection criteria. Thus, the Visiting Committee agrees the School merits a P1 for this Standard, as there are only minor recommendations and issues for reflection.*

## Commendations

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for:

1. The School's commitment, already realized in part, to increase the financial aid budget, improving access and affordability for students and their families.
2. The effective manner in which the Admission Office launches, via its thoughtful and effective policies and procedures, the School's *student-centered approach to fulfilling the ambitious mission of "finding the promise" within each student.*
3. The steady improvement in the longitudinal metrics maintained by the Admission Office (e.g., total # of interviews, etc.).
4. The print and online materials created to communicate with potential families that reflect the mission and values of the School.
5. The breadth and depth of diversity (in the broadest sense) of the student body realized over time by the Admission Office and the ongoing efforts in this area.

## Recommendation 1

The Visiting Committee recommends *that the school continue to prioritize increasing funds available for financial aid.*

## Recommendation 2

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School consider communicating the Advisor Program more prominently on the School's website, per the weakness identified by the Standard 3 Self-Study Committee.

## Recommendation 3

The Visiting Committee recommends, per the weakness identified by the Standard 3 Self-Study Committee, that the School *consider developing a formal procedure to correlate former and current students to their admissions profile.*

## **Recommendation 4**

The Visiting Committee recommends ongoing collaboration and conversation among those at the School who work with the Admission Office to identify specific needs (academics, athletics, arts, community life, etc.) that must be addressed in each year's entering class of students.

## **Recommendation 5**

The Visiting Committee suggests the Admission Office consider mechanisms it might use to reach better the full spectrum of families--i.e., more middle income vs. full and no-need families--in light of the plan to increase the financial aid budget by \$1.2 million over the next three years.

# Standard 4: Program

---

## Standard

The school provides a comprehensive program of intellectual, aesthetic, and physical activities that is appropriate to support the school's mission and core values, and is consistent with the needs of the range of students admitted. Program planning is informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful and constructive lives.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*After a protracted set of deliberations amongst the members of the committee, the decision was made to assess the program as a P2. The discussion within the committee for a P1 centered on the overall strength, coherence, and ongoing improvement of the program, and the idea that the recommendations for this standard are more accurately described as aspects warranting attention and ongoing discussion rather than clear deficiencies of the program. Also, the fact that none of the standard indicators were individually voted "No" left the committee hesitant to vote P2. The discussion for P2 revolved around the fact that a significant number of recommendations from the Standard 4 (Program) Report impacted the overarching recommendations within Part II of the Self-Study. Also, the decision hinged on the words "minor" and "significant" in the descriptions of P1 and P2. The discussions and subsequent recommendations produced in the Standard 4 (Program) Report were deemed "significant," in the sense of their importance and scope, and, thus, ultimately swayed the vote of the committee to a P2.*

## Observations

The Visiting Committee found that the program provided at Middlesex School is robust, well-rounded, and well-articulated. The School addresses professional development in numerous ways, both formally and informally; there is a pattern of curriculum review; and a commitment to ongoing growth and innovation. All aspects of the program, from Academics to Athletics to aesthetic, emotional and ethical curricula are clearly grounded in the School's mission, particularly the desire to help students "find the promise." The advisor program in particular demonstrates a strong commitment to helping each student grow throughout his or her time at Middlesex School.

This intentional focus on the School's students is evident in the self-identified "aspects warranting attention." A

commitment to further promote global awareness and to strengthen technological literacy speaks to a culture of broadening horizons. The desire to extend leadership opportunities, while at the same time working to alleviate some of the stress inherent in a demanding program, speaks to a thoughtful approach to creating an appropriate balance between challenge and the social and emotional health of the students.

While the recommendations associated with these aspects were all logical and relatively straightforward, the recommendation related to Athletics appeared to be more complicated to the Visiting Committee. All other recommendations in this standard were easily identified as student-centered changes to the program, which are unlikely to significantly challenge the overall culture of Middlesex School. As noted in the School's recommendation regarding Athletics, a serious examination of *the role of Athletics from a philosophical and functional perspective* has implications for all aspects of the School. Some ambivalence and conflicting interests were noted by the Visiting Committee regarding this recommendation.

Complicated though it may be, it was clear that this larger endeavor is in keeping with the other aspects in that the focus is on promoting the best possible experience for the School's students. It was evident that the need to reexamine the place of Athletics within the Middlesex community was not the result of any shortcoming within the sports program, but rather a response to forces beyond the gates of the School. With this in mind, the Visiting Committee strongly supports the School in embracing this recommendation, however much it seems likely to be a challenging endeavor. As there is a potential for overlap with some recommendations in Part II of the report, particularly those related to time-balance and financial aid, and to programmatic work in general, it seems appropriate to make this recommendation a priority.

## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

Like the School, the Visiting Committee found the rating of this standard to be complex. Simply put, there is no individual aspect of the program at Middlesex School that warrants a rating below P1, nor is there a cumulative quality to the program that falls below that rating. A rating of P2 may indicate the need for significant work based on an apparent shortcoming in some cases, but in this case it is clear that the rating speaks to just the opposite. The School's self-rating of P2 represents a sincere desire to grow and improve more than it does a need to catch up. Head of School Kathleen Giles puts it best when she says that "[a]s a school, our mindset is a 'P2' mindset – 'meets standard: does have significant plans/recommendations for reflection.' Middlesex will be a work in progress until its last day, and it is the responsibility and the privilege of those working for the School to work perpetually towards its improvement. A 'P2' mindset is, from our perspective, a 'growth mindset...'" The visiting committee concurs with this sentiment and so endorses the P2 rating, but with the same optimistic, forward-looking attitude with which the school embraces that rating.

## Commendations

1. The Visiting Committee commends the School's "commitment and intentional planning towards educating the whole child," which was apparent to all on the Visiting Committee. The Head of School's assertion that "all who work at Middlesex work with the kids in some way" was easily confirmed, and the impact on the School's culture, and particularly on the experience of the students, was obvious. In stopping by to meet various individuals, members of the Visiting Committee repeatedly found that they were already meeting with their advisees or with other students, and we found this commitment to making time for students, particularly through the advisory program, most impressive. The School should be extremely proud of its commitment to its students.

2. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its writing program as an example of an individual strength. We would go further, in fact, noting that other departments support, and where possible dovetail with this program. Overall collaboration between departments seems strong. In addition, attention to an appropriate level of consistency within the curriculum, while at the same time allowing for individual creativity in approaching specific classes, was an obvious strength.

3. The Visiting Committee commends the School on work already done in the area of diversity, and more importantly on the School's clear intention to continue to work in this area, as a self-recommendation from the school to clarify its understanding of the term "global," and to promote a more multi-cultural and inclusive culture is clearly already underway.

4. The Visiting Committee commends the School on their overall growth mindset, particularly as demonstrated through their choice of a P2 rating.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee concurs with the following recommendations made by the School:

*It is recommended that the School clarify its collective understanding of the term "global" and work towards identifying ways to advance global awareness within the Middlesex program and the experience of the students.*

*It is recommended that the School continue to consider the topic of time balance and its impact upon the health, happiness, and well-being of its students.*

*It is recommended that the School continue to focus upon the Development of Technological Literacy in its students by maintaining an attitude of positive exploration and growth among the faculty and ensuring the allocation of financial resources, while seeking opportunities to further incorporate technology in the classroom to facilitate the development of relevant technological literacy into our students' growth as young adults.*

*It is recommended that the School look to integrate the successful Senior Leadership Program more vertically to extend training and leadership opportunities to the younger classes of the School.*

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee concurs with the School's recommendation that it *update its understanding of the role of Athletics from a philosophical and functional perspective*, and with the School's understanding of the many cultural and structural implications, we recommend that this undertaking be given some priority.

# Standard 5: Experience of the Students

---

## Standard

The school actively considers individual students and has developed plans, policies, programs, and pedagogy to nurture, support, and encourage all students to reach their potential and to participate in the life of the school.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*The Committee, in its discussion of the School's compliance with Standard 5, repeatedly returned to the strong sense of community that characterizes life at Middlesex School. This sense of community extends to faculty, staff, alumni, and—most relevantly to this Standard—students. From their first day of new-student orientation, through their leadership experiences during their senior years and beyond graduation, Middlesex students are made to feel “known and needed.” Students are encouraged to share their stories, their talents, and their unique experiences with the School, and the community generously supports individual students in such endeavors. In many ways, the experience of the students is at the heart of our work at Middlesex School. From the School's formal programming—its curriculum, community life, and advising programs—to informal encounters between students and adults, the School endeavors to help each student “find the promise.” At Middlesex, the notion of finding one's promise is broadly applied to the cultivation of individual talent, the exploration of ideas and pursuits beyond one's comfort zone, and the development of one's sense of self. To a certain degree, the Middlesex faculty understands the task of finding one's promise to be one of collaboration between students and faculty. The Committee noted, as well, that students rarely fall through the cracks at Middlesex. In a residential community, where students and faculty regularly interact beyond the classroom in such venues as the athletic fields and the dormitories, faculty members are granted the unique opportunity to know and to nurture the whole child. In the event that a student is struggling—personally, academically, or athletically—the adults in the community are quick to recognize and respond to the student's needs. Similarly, the School is committed to catching students being good. Through this comprehensive commitment to each student, the School prioritizes the experience of the students and endeavors to serve the specific needs of each student at the School.*

*The Committee, in its discussion of the School's compliance with Standard 5, repeatedly returned to the strong sense of community that characterizes life at Middlesex School. This sense of community extends to faculty, staff, alumni, and—most relevantly to this Standard—students. From their first day of new-student orientation, through their leadership experiences during their senior years and beyond graduation, Middlesex students are made to feel “known and needed.” Students are encouraged to share their stories, their talents, and their unique experiences with the School, and the community generously supports individual students in such endeavors. In many ways, the experience of the students is at the heart of our work at Middlesex School. From the School's formal programming—its curriculum, community life, and advising programs—to informal encounters between students and adults, the School endeavors to help each student “find the promise.” At Middlesex, the notion of finding one's promise is broadly applied to the cultivation of individual talent, the exploration of ideas and pursuits beyond one's comfort zone, and the development of one's sense of self.*

*To a certain degree, the Middlesex faculty understands the task of finding one's promise to be one of collaboration between students and faculty. The Committee noted, as well, that students rarely fall through the cracks at Middlesex. In a residential community, where students and faculty regularly interact beyond the classroom in such venues as the athletic fields and the dormitories, faculty members are granted the unique opportunity to know and to nurture the whole child. In the event that a student is struggling—personally, academically, or athletically—the adults in the community are quick to recognize and respond to the student's needs. Similarly, the School is committed to catching students being good. Through this comprehensive commitment to each student, the School prioritizes the experience of the students and endeavors to serve the specific needs of each student at the School.*

## Observations

The Visiting Committee was extremely impressed by the warm relationships among students and faculty. The faculty are dedicated both to the mission of "finding the promise" in each individual and of making sure that every student knows that he or she is "known and needed." In all aspects of programming, these two facets of care and consideration of the development of the whole student are considered.

The nexus of the relationship between a student and the Middlesex community is between the student and the advisor. Advisors are limited to six students to advise and act as the clearinghouse of information of all kinds with regard to that student, and the formal contact for that student's parents. Advisors and students meet once a week individually for a full 40-minute class period to discuss the events of the week, grades, study questions or needs, personal questions or challenges, or any other topic. We observed the occurrence of three such meetings in one day, and in conversation with faculty, it is evident that they consider this charge of utmost importance. Incoming students are carefully assigned an advisor, but are permitted to make a change at the end of the first semester if they find that another adult would be a better fit. At the end of every year, students may select a new advisor for the following year. This ensures that there is good rapport between the student and the advisor. In addition to faculty, all administrators and many staff are also advisors to students, which increases the number of adults who know the students well. The relationship with one's advisor is cherished to the point that, during a dorm meeting with the theme of gratitude, one young student said that along with his family, he was most grateful for the support of his advisor.

There are numerous committees in place at Middlesex to prevent a student from "falling through the cracks" and to encourage the success of all students. The advisor receives all grades and comments prior to their availability to parents and can strategize ways for students who are challenged to improve. An advisor can help with a study plan, a peer or adult tutor, or suggest specific ways in which a student might work with a faculty member on a regular basis. At the weekly faculty meeting, advisors may bring up names of students who are having difficulty in any way, and other faculty members will make suggestions as to who might collaborate with the advisor to help the student improve. There is additionally the Radar Committee, who intervene when a student's needs supersede that of the advisor alone, and who might put into place other measures, such as counseling. Students who earn two D's or one F or whose overall grade point average falls below 75 are put on academic probation. In such cases, a student may be placed on evening study hall, reduce his or her courseload to four courses for a semester, engage a tutor, or all three. In most cases, these measures, along with continued guidance from the advisor and other faculty, work to ensure that the student is likely to succeed at Middlesex. While documented accommodations such as extended time are upheld, the program is not otherwise modified for students, but between the careful selection of applicants by the Admission Office and the individual attention students are given, it is rare for a student to leave Middlesex. In fact, the attrition rate is only 2% per year.

In addition to the advisor, boarding students have at least one houseparent with whom they check in twice a night. Finally, there are college counselors who begin to know the students informally during their first year at Middlesex, and who get to know them well during the formal college counseling program, starting in the winter of the junior year.

The whole curriculum, academic, athletic, and social, is designed with the importance of the student experience - both individual and collective - in mind. There is purposeful planning of course requirements, of meetings and activities, to celebrate both the diversity of individual experience and the collective experience of the school. Team sports, required for all ninth and tenth graders, foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging (not to mention providing a healthy experience), and the chapel program features a senior leader speaking from individual experience each week. Community conversations, held about once a month in small groups in the dormitories, support student learning with regard to the School's core values. Recently the history curriculum was revamped to coordinate research and writing skills necessary for success in the history department and the writing program, and many of the school's language and social science courses take to heart the diversity of the student population in their planning, discussions, and perspectives.

At Middlesex, all seniors are leaders, and the process of becoming a leader begins as soon as students enter the School. Ninth graders have a nine-week program called "Choices" in which conversations about making healthy decisions take place. Tenth graders have a program called "Connections" which explores healthy relationships of all kinds. In the eleventh grade, all seniors are asked to consider the topic of leadership and to determine ways they might become leaders in their senior year. They list their preferences among the leadership roles available (dorm proctors, peer supporters, diversity officers, alumni officers, chapel leaders, tour guides, student activities) and they then go through an interview process with the deans. At the end of the spring, the students are notified of their leadership position (s), and in the fall, they meet regularly with the Deans of Students and the faculty chairs of the programs in which they are leaders to discuss their development. In this way, their individual growth is supported, and their leadership strengthens the community of the School.

While at some boarding-day schools there is a separation of the day student population, no such separation was noted at Middlesex. Day students participate in the life of the school from early morning till late evening, and are grouped into day student virtual "houses" in order to have the same level of attention and participation as the boarding students. The day student parents with whom we spoke were delighted with the personal attention and advising their students received at Middlesex. In addition, at the time of our visit, the students had just completed their first weekend of student activities, and the dance was attended by 370 of the 385 students. Since day students make up 30% of the population at Middlesex, this indicates that they were also largely in attendance this past weekend. It is perhaps worth noting that the number of day students enrolled may make it possible for them to feel more an integral part of the school, since their experience is shared by so many.

With regard to diversity, there are a number of important initiatives in place to continue to develop a diverse community of students and faculty. Admissions has begun to be able to allocate more funds to the financial aid budget, such that 35% of the incoming class this year received financial aid, and the grants averaged the cost of day student tuition (currently about \$42,000). For every faculty position, the School interviews five candidates, of which at least one is a person of color. The Director of Multicultural Development and Community plans programs with various constituencies of the School and the senior diversity leaders to bring topics of diversity and global concern to the community for awareness and education. Trips for community service and trips to countries unlike our own happen during vacations and in the summer, and every attempt is made to be inclusive of the students who wish to partake. Despite these measures, the School is cognizant that the students after Middlesex will be participating in a very exciting, diverse world, and would like to improve the ways in which they promote global awareness.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**



The experience of the students at Middlesex is deep, profound, nurturing, and in direct support of the mission of the school. Each student is valued for his own potential and is encouraged by all to develop intellect, relationships with others, and contribute both to the Middlesex community and to the world. The Curriculum is planned for the whole student, and is purposeful in supporting the development of the individual and the community. Within the context of a challenging academic curriculum, there are many choices available, and students learn to select their paths with the guidance of dedicated faculty and an exceptionally strong advisory program. Students benefit from a variety of athletic experiences and myriad clubs and activities that educate as well as provide enjoyment and expansion of friendships among peers. They are also guided by the five core values of the school, which are explicitly taught through informal and formal gatherings throughout the year.

The students at Middlesex are happy, busy, intellectually curious, and good contributors to the community. The adult leaders encourage these qualities by serving as role models in everything they do and in all their interactions at the school. The element that binds the community together, and which creates the "glue" that is visible everywhere, is the sincere care and concern the faculty have for the students. This undercurrent of real affection is evident and is the basis of the positively-charged atmosphere we observed at all times.

During conversations and observations, the Visiting Committee noted a commitment to excellence in educating the whole child on the part of all faculty and administrators. While the recommendations Middlesex has made in the self-study are laudable, the Visiting Committee would like to recognize that Middlesex has done good work in these areas and it is indicative of the high standards they set for themselves that they continue to seek improvement in these areas.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its exemplary work in developing the potential of students through its thoughtful curriculum, its leadership programs from grades 9 through 12, and most especially, its advisor program. We found that the School truly lived its mission of "finding the promise" of each child, and making each child "known and needed."

2. The Visiting Committee also commends Middlesex for its purposeful planning of meetings throughout the year that inculcate in all students the importance of the five core values of the school (honesty, gratitude, respect, kindness, courage) and the attention given these values in all community events and decisions.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue its discussion of the meaning of diversity at Middlesex. While the Committee applauds the initiatives the School has undertaken, we agree with the School's own recommendation to achieve school-wide understanding of the ways in which both Diversity and Global Awareness will inform their future decisions in programming, hiring, and admissions.

# Standard 6: Resources to Support the Program

---

## Standard

Given the school's mission, there are adequate resources (space, equipment, technology, materials, and community) to support the school's program.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*Middlesex is a school with ample resources and facilities to support a vibrant program. While there remain many opportunities for growth and improvement, our school is well positioned to fund and support a rich and diverse set of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular offerings.*

## Observations

It is clear from visiting the facilities and experiencing the beautiful welcoming spaces that the school uses its resources carefully and efficiently.

The Visiting Committee observed the deliberate connection between students and the School as many students reported that they see the School as a home away from home. The School's facilities have a visual appeal and are a comfortable, communal environment. This observation is underscored further by the assigned homerooms for most teachers, which models the idea of ownership of place. It is palpable that the school has worked hard to assure that the facilities meet the needs of the 21st century as a result of the Campus Programming Study (*with the help of Brailsford and Dunlevy, a national facilities consulting firm*).

The Visiting Committee experienced firsthand the ways Middlesex School has acted upon the many recommendations of this Campus Programming Study, foremost among them the construction sites for a new dorm and the conversion of the power plant to the music and arts facility. Both of these endeavors will add to the beauty and cohesiveness of the campus environment. Among students, faculty, and parents the excitement is growing to showcase another building to further enhance the already very strong instructional program in the arts. Middlesex School takes its stewardship to be "green" seriously and is sensitive to its impact with the surrounding community, the town of Concord.

The Visiting Committee observed first-hand the *flexible and generous program that supports the changing needs of students and the faculty from year to year*. To augment the points in the Self Study, different constituencies highlighted to the Visiting Committee that financial windfalls to the School have been balanced between the demands for "hardware" such as facilities, maintenance and materials, and the funding for financial aid.

The Visiting Committee observed that the School is wrestling with the *time demands presented by a residential school with as broad and deep a program as Middlesex. In some ways, this issue can be framed as an embarrassment of riches. The School offers a rich academic program, dozens of clubs and extracurricular offerings, and a recently expanded student activities program for weekends*. That the School is considering the effects of time balance came as no surprise to the Visiting Committee given the School's clear commitment to a Mindfulness Program. The Visiting Committee spoke with many faculty who mentioned the richness of life at Middlesex and who appreciated their abilities to connect with many aspects of the School from the classroom to the athletic fields, from dormitories to clubs.

The Visiting Committee observed that the library and technology plan support the broad purposes of the educational program and are supported by the faculty. Teachers reported to have ample technology available for classroom use and commended the availability of training to use new materials. The Visiting Committee learned that there have been staffing changes in the Library, but recognized that student leadership programs have been used to strengthen library's philosophy to be both a "living room" and area for study.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of visiting with Middlesex parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees was their acknowledgment that their concerns are listened to and satisfactory answers are provided for all aspects of their needs, and, most importantly, fulfilled in a timely manner.

## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The P1 rating on this standard is well deserved.

## Commendations

- The Visiting Committee commends the School for the *significant gains in the area of sustainability and energy efficiency* as deferred maintenance projects have been addressed, as well as the *enhancements* that the School has made to a financial aid plan.
- The Visiting Committee commends the School for supporting the faculty and staff, as many constituencies responded in a similar way when asked about their needs: "we get almost everything we want, whether instructional materials, new technology, or access to innovative programs."
- The Visiting Committee commends the co-curricular and extra-curricular programs that seem deeply integrated with the mission of the School, and faculty interviewed model universal engagement with such programs and initiatives.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee concurs with the Self Study recommendations that *the Board continue its work to articulate a new financial aid funding target for the School and then develop a plan to fund that new target*, and the Visiting Committee further concurs that the School continue to work toward a plan for the gradual increase in the deferred maintenance budget to reflect more accurately the long-term maintenance needs.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to address practical constraints such as time, the speed of technological obsolescence, and schedule constraints as the faculty are the driving force for its innovative and rich programs.

# Standard 8: Residential Program and/or Homestay Program

---

## Standard

The residential program and/or homestay program provide for an intentional curriculum, appropriate facilities, engaging activities, and adequate supervision to meet the needs of each student.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*We feel that we pass Standard 8 and “provide for an intentional curriculum, appropriate facilities, engaging activities, and adequate supervision to meet the needs of each student.” Given that we are a boarding school, our Residential Program is integral to the success of our community and the development of our students. Our intentional curriculum includes our Community Life, Advisor, and Senior Leadership Programs. Each faculty member plays an important role within our community life, whether it be as Head of House, member of a house team, advisor, and/or leader of Community Life Programs (Choices, Connections, etc.). Our student leaders also play a vital role in the development of our community, serving as proctors, peer supporters, and student activities leaders. We feel that we have a solid infrastructure within our residential life program that has led to a strong sense of community.*

*In that Middlesex is a residential school, the program associated with residential life is integral to the life of the School. The “intellectual, ethical, creative, and physical development” of our students is at the heart of our work in the houses, which includes both residential dormitories and groups of day students, and furthers the development of students within the larger framework and expectations of the School.*

*Our residential program operates with a uniform curriculum developed collaboratively by the Deans of Students, the Student Activities Coordinator, and the Heads of House. The objectives of the residential program are broadly understood as facilitating the development of the individual student within the construct of the broader Middlesex community and establishing that community. For the individual student, we hope to foster independence and responsibility and to engender growth in interpersonal skills. For the community, the residential program allows us to establish a common set of norms for behavior and to promote respectful living within a community, and it both accommodates and integrates individuals with a variety of backgrounds into our shared community.*

*Residential life is particularly significant to the education that takes place outside the bounds of structured class and athletics. We are guided in our behavior by our Handbook, but also by the ethical standards and community norms that we spend much of our shared residential time developing and reinforcing. The constancy of residential life, as well as the high*

*level of communication among faculty and students, also ensures that houses are often the first place for monitoring a student's wellness and adjustment to life at Middlesex. Communication is at the core of our work, and each boarding student engages with a faculty member in the house each night, and often within the homes of the resident faculty.*

## Observations

The Visiting Committee was very impressed with the care and attention that Middlesex pays to their residential program. The School has a very intentional curriculum that reinforces the mission. The program has an age-appropriate progression that leads students through the shaping of habits in the younger years and challenges them to be responsible leaders in the community as they mature.

The Visiting Committee had the opportunity to attend a Community Life Meeting in various houses, and we were unanimously impressed with the level of conversation that students had on the topic of gratitude. Not only were students, as young as freshmen, comfortable opening up and sharing their thoughts on this topic with other members of their grade, they did so in front of strangers and in larger groups of mixed-grade students. The exercise demonstrated the very close, happy, and thoughtful community that the School seeks to cultivate.

The Visiting Committee heard many positive comments from faculty and students about the improving weekend entertainment offerings. The Director of Student Activities, with the Student Activities Committee, organizes positive activities every weekend. In addition, the School encourages faculty members to sponsor trips with students on the weekend, and subsidizes the outings such that students pay a maximum of \$20 and those on financial aid are covered completely. Many faculty and students take advantage of these trips to museums, sports games, movies, and other locations. The Visiting Committee again noted this opportunity for the faculty and students to engage with each other.

The Visiting Committee sensed that the community, on the whole, is a very caring and inclusive environment. There was some sentiment expressed by students and faculty that the community could benefit from better addressing issues of diversity within the community. The School has a group of students known as Diversity Officers, who serve to engage the community in discussions around areas such as gender, class, race, and other types of diversity.

The School's first recommendation to itself suggested that *the Director of Student Activities initiate more house games and competitions to increase the sense of House identity for each student*. Since the writing of the Self Study, the Director has already started to do so. One such competition was the recent "Air Guitar" activity which pitted house against house in a lip-syncing contest. Almost all the houses, with the exception of the Day Students who could not corral enough of themselves in a short time, participated heartily. As the School has already begun to address this recommendation, it would be redundant for it to appear in the Visiting Committee recommendations.

The School's second recommendation seeks to further include day students into the residential program. Middlesex strives to create a tighter community among the day students so that they will feel more engaged in the life of the School. Currently, all day students are in one of four "virtual houses," in which they meet for community events. These groups meet during the Community Life Meetings and a few other school gatherings during the year. Because the day student houses don't meet as often as their residential counterparts, the students obviously don't develop quite the same rapport. The Visiting Committee concurs with the School's recommendation to investigate ways to strengthen the bond among these students.

As a third recommendation, the School seeks to evaluate the evening duty teams in a method similar to the in-house faculty. The Visiting Committee did note a few faculty members who expressed the benefits to the program that could be gained from increased consistency and feedback.

The School's fourth recommendation suggests that in-house faculty teams meet more regularly to discuss the state of the houses. The Visiting Committee was very impressed with the excellent work that the house faculty already do to communicate concerns electronically and understands that house faculty do meet informally around campus to share

concerns that they have for students. In addition, the Heads of House already have one to two meetings per week to maintain consistency across dorms and discuss issues. The School will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication, balanced with the time they have to add another meeting.

The fifth recommendation from the Self Study committee suggests that the student proctors be given more responsibility to bolster interest in this once-coveted position. The Visiting Committee heard students and faculty express the sentiment that this position does not have the same status in the community that it did before the School shifted its focus toward creating leadership for all seniors. In order to encourage the best students to apply for the proctor positions, the School may consider ways in which it can make these positions more attractive to the top candidates.

The Visiting Committee heard a few comments relating to the sixth recommendation, that the School continue to pay close attention to the times that students are free for extended periods of time and places students may go at those times. This concern was mainly expressed related to Wednesday afternoons and during the time in between athletic seasons. The Visiting Committee supports the Dean's office's continued goal to maintain an awareness of the students' whereabouts.

The final recommendation in the Self Study for this section is for the School to continue to assess the Community Life Program and find ways to improve it and its level of satisfaction among students and faculty. The Visiting Committee supports the continued assessment of this excellent program, which many students embrace as a welcome pause to reflect on those values which they normally don't have time to think about.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The Visiting Committee strongly concurs with the School's rating of P1. The School's strong programming demonstrates an understanding of high school students. The residential faculty and the Dean's office clearly do important research into best practices for life balance. In addition, the School consistently reviews of the effect of its programs on student development. With no reservations, the Visiting Committee finds the School in compliance with this standard.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its continuing efforts on encompassing day students in their residential program.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its programs which lead students through the developmental stages of adolescence in a very deliberate fashion.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its focus on the development of student leaders that, specifically, seeks to provide each senior with a leadership position in the community.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its continued work to evaluate the effectiveness of their residential program and then take action to improve it.
5. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its amazingly committed residential faculty who continue to devote their free time to entertaining students with weekend activity offerings, and the School for its commitment to supporting these efforts by providing funding for activities.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee supports the School's recommendations on the following objectives:

1. *that the School continue to be aware of places and times in the lives of students that warrant closer attention.*
2. that the School continue to assess the Community Life Program and find ways to improve it and its level of satisfaction among students and faculty.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to investigate methods of including day students into the residential program.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School consider an evaluation program for the evening duty teams to improve consistency and communication among the members of the team.

## **Recommendation 4**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to consider ways to enhance the job of the student proctors to entice the best candidates to desire these positions that are crucial to this residential program.

## **Recommendation 5**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to consider ways improve inclusivity and equity by continuing to engage students in exploring ways to address campus issues of gender, class, ethnicity, race, and orientation.



# Standard 9: Faculty

---

## Standard

There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty to carry out the mission of the school and the school follows a comprehensive and defined program of professional development that supports continued enhancement of teachers' skills.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*Our group unanimously voted that this standard should receive a P1 designation. According to the Faculty Handbook, Middlesex faculty are expected to “teach, perform administrative roles in the conduct of school business, and to undertake advising and supervisory roles” which include weekend chaperonage and evening responsibilities in dormitories and around campus. On top of these roles, other faculty responsibilities may include coaching, supporting students' work in community service, publications, debate, journalism, sustainability, and the school's garden. The faculty at Middlesex School is composed of both teaching and non-teaching faculty. The School employs 88 total faculty members. Of the 62 teaching faculty, 44 have advanced degrees. Of our 26 non-teaching faculty, 11 have advanced degrees. We supplement our coaching staff with a handful of outside coaches and our individual music lessons feature a collection of top teachers from the greater Boston area. Otherwise the faculty model is a full-time model. Per the faculty handbook, the School has an established procedure for hiring qualified faculty, and for evaluating faculty at the first, third, seventh, and every subsequent five years. The Dean of Faculty, with support from the Head of School, ensures the professional wellbeing of the entire faculty community. The School has on-campus and campus-adjacent housing for many teaching and non-teaching faculty. Not all faculty members reside on campus; however, it is expected that faculty attend the various all-school events, including evening events, remain available to students and colleagues during the academic day, and generally maintain a consistent presence on campus when school is in session.*

## Observations

Collective talent, affection for students and colleagues, and sincere commitment to the School's mission were all easily and immediately recognized by the Visiting Committee. This is a dedicated group of professionals who love their work and are appreciated for the service that they provide to their school and to individual students. Faculty at Middlesex are all in service to teaching and learning.

Numerous conversations with students and faculty recognize the powerful relationships that form at Middlesex between faculty and their students. These bonds not only serve to usher students through their time at the School and help them to "find the promise" as individuals, but also result in a strong sense of community, shared mission, and positive culture on campus. Students seem very happy at Middlesex, and a significant source of their contentment is the guidance they are receiving in so many ways from their faculty mentors. The powerful relationships were also apparent among the faculty themselves and with their respect for the School's administration. While this is the case at many of our schools, the positive atmosphere at Middlesex appears to be remarkable; every student the Visiting Committee encountered had positive and sincere comments about the role their teachers play in the unique atmosphere on campus.

Faculty at Middlesex work extremely hard, and generally seem to delight in the opportunities they have to be part of the community. One of the obvious reasons for this is that the School has a detailed hiring process. This results in the fact that Middlesex is routinely hiring the "right" people. The hiring process is thorough, carefully constructed, and is working well. The department chairs have a prominent role in the process, but the hiring team is experienced and competent.

Hiring the right people also makes the execution of their faculty evaluation process run well. The system related to classroom instruction is both leveled and cycled and seems to be enthusiastically embraced by all involved. While general academic competence and rapport with the students are established in the hiring process and anticipated, the first year evaluation seems to focus on orientation and support. Numerous class visits, a faculty orientation program, weekly meetings during the first semester, etc. all sufficiently introduce and support faculty new to Middlesex. In this first year, faculty are appropriately mentored, and are given useful feedback on their performance by department chairs, deans, students, and colleagues. The evaluation gets more rigorous in the third year, as this is a time when the review process is designed to - among other things - determine "fit" for the future. This level involves more critical feedback. The expectation is that teachers are independent at this point, and excelling in the profession. If they're not, this system is useful for the faculty member and the School, as the third year seeks systematically to address any concerns. While this can be a critical time in the relationship, the program is scheduled, anticipated, and accepted. This tier of the evaluation program includes multiple class visits, documenting concerns, and firmly addressing performance issues. Evaluations after the third year happen systematically and are more focused on professional growth. This practice seeks to keep teachers fresh, learning, and advancing in the profession.

Faculty are also systematically evaluated in areas not related to classroom instruction. The process for community life review includes all areas of school life, and is conversational in nature. The documentation associated with this exercise is appropriate, informing, and valuable.

The detailed hiring practice and the specific tier evaluation program result in Middlesex attracting and developing excellent faculty. The status of the School's faculty program is impressive; the healthy faculty culture contributes enormously to the positive atmosphere on campus.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The Visiting Committee enthusiastically validated the P1 standard regarding faculty. Middlesex has a very talented and engaged faculty. They are committed to the school's mission and are an enormous source of strength for the success of the School. They serve as effective teachers, coaches, leaders, friends, and mentors to students. There is a shared sense of mission and energy in this group, as the dedication to their profession in general and to life at Middlesex is very apparent to the Visiting Committee. The School is ordinarily hiring the right people and providing effective support and growth opportunities for their development as educators. Once faculty members are hired, there is a systematic orientation process and evaluation system that is appropriately designed and effectively executed.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the School for attracting, employing, and--in most cases--retaining, faculty that are ideal fits for the School's mission.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the School for the fact that the School brings in a candidate of color for each open position and demonstrates a commitment to considering this measure of diversity within the faculty.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the School for employing a working orientation process for new faculty that effectively introduces and supports teachers at the School.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the School for a faculty evaluation process which is detailed, sequenced, thorough, and comprehensive.
5. The Visiting Committee commends the School specifically for its generous professional development program--including the Tomorrow's Master Teacher Program--and generally for its commitment to professional growth in many forms.
6. The Visiting Committee commends the School for the "Philosophy of Instruction" document that guides good teaching practices at Middlesex and the practice of regular faculty meetings in which students, teaching and learning are discussed.
7. The Visiting Committee commends the School for the collective commitment to mission among the faculty, and a deep respect for their profession and the School.

## **Recommendation 1**

*Based upon the constituencies surveyed, it is recommended that the School continue and enhance its efforts to recruit and retain a diverse faculty.*

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee encourages Middlesex to continue to identify faculty housing as a strategic priority and to consider articulating the housing policy more clearly.

## **Recommendation 3**

While the School's professional development program appears to be working well, the Visiting Committee recommends that Middlesex consider a more customized and structured assignment of professional development resources in order to bring more clarity to the various offerings (in diversity, residential life, coaching, and pedagogy).

## **Recommendation 4**

*Although there is ample access to state-of-the-art resources and a high quality of life, it is recommended that attention be paid to deferred maintenance in some of the teaching spaces around campus, namely the older classroom spaces in Eliot Hall.*

# Standard 10: Administration

---

## Standard

The administration provides leadership and maintains a structure to facilitate the effective functioning of the school, including the participation of faculty in decision-making.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

Passing (P1, P2): The students' experience is supported.

Failing (F1, F2): The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*Middlesex is fortunate to have an experienced, talented, engaged, energetic, effective, and thoughtful administration that is invested in the well-being of the school, the members of the community, and the stewardship of the institution. Administrators are involved in all facets of school life, since they are educators first and foremost, and the feedback from all of the School's constituencies surveyed support this claim. The administrators are also eager to be at the top of their respective fields, and they relish the opportunity for professional development and professional growth.*

*The Committee voted to give Middlesex a P1 grade on this standard. The Committee unanimously felt that we are blessed with an excellent group of experienced administrators, and we offered minor suggestions for improvement that are addressed in our report.*

## Observations

From the moment the Visiting Committee arrived on campus and began interacting with faculty, administrators (whom we recognize are also faculty), trustees, students, and staff, we were struck by the centrality of purpose each and every individual brings to his or her life at Middlesex. It was (and is) apparent in every welcoming smile; in the many times "finding the promise" fell from the lips of community members; in the contributions of all adults day in day out; in how well students are cared for and known; in the appreciation of students as they speak of their advisors and being able to do "all 3" and more; in the pride community members feel in shared endeavors; and, as specifically related to our purpose here, in the participation of all faculty in the Self-Study report. People believe in this place, want to be here, and give of themselves in tremendous ways in service to teaching and learning.

Such shared purpose among so many who fit so well derives, in large part, from the Head of School and from her leadership, conviction, and example. All else flows from there: the expectations that are set, how those to whom responsibility is

assigned (from administrators to full time teachers to staff) meet their obligations, who contributes to what when, how work is assessed and evaluated, and more. The end result at Middlesex is an effectively-run school that is not hung up on doing things as they have always been done. What does this last point mean right now as it pertains to this standard? It means that the Head is currently in the process of re-imagining the administrative structure; and while such change is exciting and invigorating for some, for others, not surprisingly, it is disconcerting, even anxiety producing.

The Visiting Committee is impressed at the time (years!) and care that is going into consideration of change and restructuring--the need to meld the goals of the School (as articulated in the strategic plan), the strengths and weaknesses of current administrators and the overall team, and the aspirations of younger faculty--and encourages open dialogue among all faculty about what is to come.

With all this said, the Visiting Committee recognizes that some tension exists as regards the evaluation of administrators as compared to teaching faculty. The latter are evaluated thoroughly by peers and supervisors and there is the sense that administrators could benefit from as through an evaluation. However, administrators feel they are as--if not more--thoroughly reviewed on a yearly basis, through self-evaluation and review by the Head. This disconnect should be addressed.

The issue shared in the Self Study that *18% of faculty did not fully support the statement "Faculty members are appropriately included in the decision-making process"* was pursued by the Visiting Committee and ultimately we feel there are myriad reasons why faculty might have expressed this sentiment. Overall, however, given the inclusiveness of faculty on all sorts of committees, the open discussion at faculty meetings, and the open door policy of administrators, we believe faculty are appropriately involved in the decision-making process at the School.

## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

All faculty at Middlesex are in service first and foremost to the students; that is at the core of the School, at the core of its mission. Members of the administration are *part of the faculty, not separate from it; they are broadly sensitive to the well-being of students and faculty, are invested in the daily work of the School, and work collaboratively to manage the School.* This genre and caliber of leadership leads to the effective functioning of the School. Thus, the Visiting Committee agrees the School merits a P1 for this Standard, as there are only minor recommendations and issues for reflection.

## Commendations

1. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the extent to which Administrators, in addition to meeting their individual administrative roles, are involved in all facets of school life, certainly as advisors but also as teachers, members of house teams, coaches, and/or leaders of committees or programs.
2. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the degree of respect held by teaching faculty for the talent, commitment, and sensitivity of administrators.
3. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the Head of School and her deft, visionary, and creative restructuring of the administrative team in response to the ever-evolving needs of the School, the departure of key administrators, and a commitment to the growth and development of younger, aspiring faculty.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School address the tension that exists--as at many schools--as regards the evaluation of administrators as compared to teaching faculty.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the administration remain conscious of the fact that some faculty might feel anxious about upcoming administrative change and that clear communication help allay those anxieties.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the administration remain aware of those faculty, however small their number, who might not understand the many ways in which they participate in decision making.

# Standard 11: Evaluation and Assessment

---

## Standard

The school engages in forms of programmatic assessment consistent with fulfilling its mission and core values. This data is used to inform decision-making and planning.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*Middlesex values the review of its faculty, staff, students, and programs. Throughout the course of an academic year, the School engages in a variety of evaluations of its personnel in relation to his/her work in his/her respective academic or administrative department, residential life, community life, facilities, and athletics. The evaluation process is a collaborative endeavor between the person being reviewed and the person with whom he/she reports for review. During this evaluation process there is significant emphasis on self-reflection and an open dialogue between evaluators to support professional and personal development. The School's programs are evaluated on a regular basis and changes to academic, athletic, and cocurricular offerings are made with the best interests of the students in mind.*

*Prior to voting on this standard, time was spent discussing the distinction between the Pass 1 and Pass 2 grades as they applied to this standard. In discussing the overall scope of our research, the consensus of the group was that, in many ways, we already have good plans and systems in place for evaluating our programs and personnel at most levels but that there is room for improvement. In suggesting that the School develop a strategy for evaluating department heads on a schedule different from the standard evaluation process undergone by all teachers, the committee feels that we are recommending a minor change to current policy. We feel implementation of a systematic coaching evaluation may also entail some minor work and change to the current policy. Ultimately, the committee agreed that while our evaluation programs can be strengthened in certain areas we are not recommending any major additions or changes to the programs already in place. The Committee voted to give Middlesex a Pass 1 grade (student experience is well supported and minor changes are suggested) on this standard.*

## Observations

While the reach of the Evaluation and Assessment Standard is broad in its scope, the concept of 'evaluation' is clearly an integral, intentional enterprise at Middlesex. The School's program is subject to frequent review, and the faculty participates



in a multi-tiered process that takes into account varied responsibilities and tenure. Student feedback and performance further contribute to the measurement of success at Middlesex.

The basic themes characterizing the recommendations made by the School regarding evaluation fall into two basic categories: 1) consistency of implementation and 2) frequency of review.

With regards to consistency, the few misgivings that surfaced during interviews stemmed from potential oversights in some aspect of the actual process itself, often related to the collection of data. In some instances in the case of faculty evaluations that might mean a missed opportunity to survey students at the end of a term, or more significantly, circumstances might not have allowed a particular administrator to complete a classroom observation.

With regards to frequency, there seemed to be some discrepancy in practice surrounding timing/timelines. As past practice for example, the Director of Athletics conducted reviews by sport and season on a rotating basis, allowing for the possibility that some coaches might transition in and out of a sport without ever being formally evaluated. Similarly, department heads have been evaluated on the same schedule as typical for faculty, which means that a recently evaluated, newly appointed department head might not be reevaluated in that new role for five years.

In spite of the occasional lapses in application of existing policy specifics, the Visiting Committee was able to confirm that the faculty felt an overall sense of the School's evaluative processes as being supportive and comprehensive in nature. First-year faculty members, and veteran department heads alike spoke to these qualities. The Dean of Faculty described the first-year evaluation as “a courtesy of professional attention” that is nurturing and validating by design. The third-year evaluation is intensive in different ways, but still collaborative and used as a means of identifying further opportunities for professional growth. The seventh and ensuing five-year evaluations focus on enrichment; they foster self-reflection and are largely self-directed in focus.

The Visiting Committee appreciates the spirit that frames the way the School has self-assessed its standing with respect to this Standard, and the way in which it wrestled with the distinction between a P1 and P2 standing. The recommendations proposed by the school are relevant and appropriate as topics warranting additional exploration. The School may find some challenges in addressing these recommendations, but the resolution of any tension between differing perspectives will prove fruitful.

In conversations with various department heads, the Visiting Committee encountered some reservations about the need for more formal evaluation. There was a general openness to the idea of more evaluation, but a widespread feeling that it was not entirely necessary. There are numerous ways in which department heads in particular are constantly evaluated on an informal basis: participation on the Academic Council; “State of the Department” meetings with Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty, and Head of School; budgetary oversight, etc. Likewise, when problems arise, they are addressed—difficult conversations are not avoided, or shelved until the “proper” evaluation timeline. Department heads felt the same constancy of informal evaluation was happening within individual departments as well.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The thoroughness with which the entirety of the *Self-Study Report* was undertaken mirrors the School's mindset pertaining to evaluation. The Visiting Committee feels that the P1 rating for Standard Eleven is indeed justified.

## **Commendations**

- The Visiting Committee commends the School for the frequency with which student performance is assessed.
- The Visiting Committee commends the School for genuinely embracing evaluation as a means for institutional advancement.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School should follow its own recommendations regarding faculty and administrative evaluation, while being mindful of feasibility (not overburdening individuals or systems) and maintaining a clear point of synthesis in the evaluation process of faculty as administrative responsibilities shift.

# Standard 12: Health and Safety

---

## Standard

The school is a safe and healthy place for students and faculty.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*Middlesex School maintains a range of measures to ensure the health and safety of the students, faculty, and staff on campus. Our community is well served by a Health Center that is accessible 24/7, professional counseling services, athletic training staff, a mindfulness program, house faculty, and a strong faculty advising system. According to recent surveys of current students, faculty, parents, staff, and young alumni, the School is successful in its mission to make its campus a safe and healthy place for the entire community; on all surveys, this standard was given a score of 8-9 out of 10. While not compromising the welcoming character of the School, we strive to put prudent procedures in place to protect the community from severe weather events and other unexpected natural phenomena; accidents or injuries that take place in the classroom, athletic fields, theater or workplace; harm that could be caused by outside intruders or members of the community itself.*

## Observations

The School is a safe and healthy place for students and faculty. The School has various ways of meeting the standard successfully and responsibility for campus safety, security, and wellness is therefore distributed among a number of departments and individuals. Both internal teams and outside partners help monitor and implement best practices. Despite its remote location, which helps safeguard against intruders, the school is actively addressing issues with regard to scenarios in the event of campus emergencies. The school has a working relationship with town officials such as the Chief of Police and Public Safety officials in the town of Concord. The School inspected a wide range of safety and security features and advances careful compliance with applicable local state and federal regulation.

Healthcare is also adequately addressed both for the residential student and day student. Faculty and coaches are required to train for CPR/AED & as well as concussion protocols.

The School has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the Health Center. Clearly the central location is an advantage, as

several nurses and faculty shared. On the other hand, the Center has all the challenges one would expect of a basement space with limited square feet and housed in an old building with little natural light. Indeed, the efforts to make the place welcoming--lighting, flowers, posted information--meant one Committee member shared, "I walked in and felt it was a great place--and one I bet students like visiting."

Several programs--Mindfulness (to the committee, quite interesting and innovative), community life, and advisor especially--are outstanding and clearly have a very positive impact on student health. In addition the program of roamers seems to be working well and provide additional interaction between faculty and students.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The committee found Middlesex School to be a warm and welcoming place with great concern for the "whole child." Health and safety are uppermost concerns in the overall program without being obtrusively present. The work in and out of the classroom, dorm, athletic field is clearly founded on principles of well-being for students and adults of a caring community.

## **Commendations**

- The Visiting Committee commends the School for undertaking thoughtful improvements in campus safety and security, including day to day operations and emergency planning.
- The Visiting Committee commends the School for creating processes and procedures to address stress-related issues and time-management difficulties.
- The Visiting Committee commends the School for addressing a change in Dining Services to move to healthier food choices for students as well as improving the quality of the ingredients used in the preparation of the food.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to review its safety practices by educating the community more deliberately in the use of the alert beacons and examine its procedures for check-in of guests, deliveries and contractors.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to examine the Health Center and athletic trainer staffing.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to examine its food service offerings, especially on nutritional content, allergies, and religious demands.

# Standard 13: Communication

---

## Standard

The school maintains effective systems of external and internal communication and record keeping that inform all constituents and facilitate participation where appropriate.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*Middlesex does an excellent job with its internal and external communication across constituencies. Through a variety of modes of communications, parents, students, and alumni are well connected and informed. Internally, the evolution of our digital network, especially, has resulted in faster and more efficient communication on campus. Middlesex has done a good job of adapting itself to the currents of change, from landlines to wireless systems. Middlesex has faced the challenges of the digital age, adapting to the needs of a small, tight-knit community with a global reach. Survey results indicate that there is overall satisfaction with both internal and external communications: 92% of parents, 85% of young alumni, 98% of faculty, 92% of students, and 88% of staff agree or strongly agree.*

*The School's current social media outlets include a Facebook page, a Twitter account, and an Instagram account. Our social media policy includes an effort to post to at least one account daily. We evaluate each post by its potential to be relevant and helpful to at least two of the following constituencies: alumni, parents, current students, and prospective families. We also ensure each post is in accordance with the branding of the school and reflects the most current language of the institution. We also seek posts that engage the audience in an inclusive conversation or specific action, such as feedback or online giving.*

## Observations

As noted in the Self Study, seven different offices hold records -- Admissions, Academics, College, Alumni/Development, Head's Office, Technology, and the Health Center. These records are currently a mix of paper-based and digital documents that are stored in cabinets in most offices and in a room in the Development Office. In the past decade, some files have transitioned into electronic form (the College Office through Naviance, the Admissions Office uses a Filemaker database, the Academics Office has a Senior Systems database, the Alumni Office uses an alumni/parent database Millennium, the Technology Office keeps electronic files using a variety of products), these forms and databases hold different purposes. The

School additionally notes as an area of concern that *records in the Alumni/Development Office are neither fireproof nor waterproof*. The Visiting Committee observed that there are occasional communication problems caused by these databases being unable to work in synchronization. As an illustration, the Admissions database does not update into the Alumni/Development database should an alumnus come in to the School as a prospective parent and provide new contact information.

The Visiting Committee learned through conversation that the school is currently looking into questions of records retention, including ways to improve the storage of records and determining what to keep on paper, what to scan, and how to code the paperwork that is scanned so that different offices can access only what they need. This question of the retention of historical records, files, and documents is one that the School seems to be addressing proactively. The School has met with different companies to discuss the outsourcing of this big job of scanning, recognizing that the capacity to do this work is not available in house.

The Visiting Committee observed that the archives of the School are similarly neither fireproof nor waterproof. Given the location of the archives on the second floor of the library, it appears that the most likely danger to these important records of the School is neither fire nor water, but rather sunlight. The Visiting Committee appreciates that the School has recognized the need to formally care for the archives and has recently designated some time for a faculty member to take charge of this aspect. Given the space constraints of the archives, this is another department that could be a part of the conversations about digitalization.

The Visiting Committee observed that communication about financial aid information is clear, complete, and closely kept between the invested parties: parents, students, and the Director of Financial Aid. The Visiting Committee applauds that this sensitive information is not communicated outside of this circle.

The Visiting Committee found that the publications of the School allow for *appropriate communication with school constituencies*. The School's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts have thousands of followers, and it is clear that the posts encourage all constituencies to be invested in the day-to-day happenings of the school. The School has, with a single Twitter feed, Facebook page, and Instagram account, a limited digital footprint designed to meet the interests and needs of current students, alumni, current and past parents of the School. The Visiting Committee observed that this consolidation of accounts appears to improve the School's digital legacy and provides a clear single narrative of the Middlesex experience.

Time and again, the Visiting Committee was impressed by the faculty who mentioned advising at the heart of their jobs and the benefits that this has for both students and teachers. It is clear that students are seen, known, and cared for here at Middlesex, and the ways that the School communicates both about and with students seems to be at the center of that care. While the *advisor's role (as stated in the Handbook) is to serve as the "official conduit between the school and parents,"* it is clear that advisors go above and beyond the confines of this definition. The amount of informal communication directly about students that happens among different constituencies of the School through advisors is noteworthy. This is a community that communicates about its students in formal and informal ways, both regularly and with great care.

The Staff Council and the All Staff Meeting provide mechanisms that are clear and systemic to solicit feedback and input from staff regarding decision making. Numerous opportunities exist both to make staff members feel truly included in the community and to celebrate accomplishments and milestones for staff members. Both staff members and faculty members express appreciation for the ways in which they are included in decision-making processes.

## Conclusions and Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee felt strongly that Middlesex School's rating of P1 for Standard 13, Communication, is fair and accurate. Middlesex School *does an excellent job with its internal and external communication across constituencies*.

## Commendations

1. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for *communicating effectively through a variety of different means, both traditional and electronic*. Through a variety of print materials and social media platforms, the School is able to engage different constituencies and keep them up-to-date about the goings on around campus.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the strength of the advising system as a hub of communication between families and the School. Advisors are to be commended for the care they put into their work in weekly meetings with advisees and the communication with parents that supplements that work.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the School for the degree to which the entire community takes seriously a commitment to consistently communicate in both formal and informal ways that support each student's Middlesex experience. The School utilizes the power of face-to-face communication and leverages the small size of the School in order to consistently hold the experience of the students at the center of the work.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue its general conversation about the preservation of important records and documents including consideration of digitization of documents to ensure longevity and ensure ease of access, and more specifically, that it completes its goal of developing *a comprehensive plan for the collection, organization, storage, and preservation of, and access to, important school records and archival materials*.



# Standard 14: Infrastructure

---

## Standard

There are adequate resources (personnel, finances, facilities, equipment, and materials) to provide for the overall institutional needs of the school.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P2. Meets Standard: does have significant plans/recommendations and issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

**Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.**

*After reviewing the relevant documentation and discussing with the faculty, staff, and Board, the committee believes that Middlesex positively supports the current student experience and therefore meets Standard 14. However, the School has identified certain areas it needs to address in order to ensure that the exemplary student experience continues in the School's second century. These areas relate to long-term facilities needs and overall budget structure. We enumerate the strengths and weaknesses of the school below and give our recommendations.*

*Middlesex School provides adequate resources to provide for the overall institutional needs of the School. The School has an experienced and dedicated team in the Business Office that manages and maximizes the School's financial and physical resources. Accordingly, there are clear short-term and long-term plans and procedures in place for accounting and facilities. With respect to the latter, the long-term plan to maintain and improve Middlesex's facilities is clear, and the School has done a commendable job of chipping away at its checklist of deferred maintenance given its available resources.*

## Observations

The Visiting Committee is highly impressed with how the School has tackled the planning and execution of a process to create and increase resources to satisfy their institutional needs. There is a clear sense of purpose and urgency in the planning for, and implementation of, resources that will position the School well to handle the challenges of its next century.

The level of intentional and deliberate identification and prioritization of deferred maintenance and capital projects is truly inspiring, but equally impressive is how thoughtfully the plan has been carried out, how well it has been communicated, and how simultaneously directive and fluid it has been able to function. There is no doubt among the students, parents, faculty,

staff, and trustees with whom we talked that the School has a plan, that it is sticking to it, and that the plan is working. It is also obvious that the broader school community believes in the plan fully enough that resources to support the plan have been forthcoming in a timely and effective manner. Clear evidence of this support can be seen with the fiscal year 2014 giving levels of 50% of solicitable alumni and 90% of current parents, and the impending success of a critical capital campaign that has substantially exceeded its fundraising target.

The Visiting Committee was particularly impressed with the School's creation of a tool that will allow them to measure their current financial status against Board-determined benchmarks, its multi-year budget projection worksheet, and its detailed prioritization matrix (based on energy usage, cost, and potential for future deterioration) for projects on the deferred maintenance priorities list. These tools and the practice of adhering to them, have undoubtedly led to the considerable success the School has already seen and the clear direction they plan to follow for financial and facilities resources. This bodes well, as additional financial resources already in process become available and the deferred maintenance total declines, for the School's well-aimed plans to increase the financial aid budget and tackle other resource needs such as tuition structure and the updating of equipment.

We were particularly impressed with the creativity and strategic thinking behind the Oil to Music initiative, blending expense and resource management, sustainability, and renovation and repurposing of existing spaces to satisfy several major infrastructure needs. This was a brilliantly devised plan, wonderfully conceived and executed, and with an engaging story to rally wide community support. Shifting the Facilities Team to the Paine Barn, outside of the main campus, has presented challenges both geographic and relational, but they are adapting to the logistical challenges their distance from campus now presents.

There is still much work to be done, for sure, but the work that has been accomplished thus far is strategic, significant, and admirable; and the steadfast attention to keeping at it will undoubtedly pay similar dividends. As always, there are some things beyond the School's control, such as the defined benefit plan, but the School has taken steps to be both responsible to those to whom they should be in the benefit plan and to their own future by containing that program and planning for a time when they can permanently reposition it in the School's best interest.

The Visiting Committee is in complete agreement with the Self Study, in finding that there are adequate resources in the form of personnel, finances, facilities, equipment, and materials to support the experience of the student and the accomplishment of the mission.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The Visiting Committee believes that the School has positioned itself very well to meet its short and long-term challenges. We are impressed with the thoughtful consideration and dogged determination that is clearly evident in the planning and implementation to secure the resources it needs going forward. We applaud their efforts and believe they should be very proud.

The Visiting Committee supports the rating of the School as P2 for this standard, but only as an acknowledgement of the significance of the work they already have plans to accomplish. This is an important distinction, because the Committee believes that the amount of reflection by the School, the resulting plans, and the progress to date clearly warrant, to us, a rating of P1.

## Commendations

1. The Visiting Committee commends the School on the strength of its financial and operations leadership team.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the School on the intentional and deliberate method with which the School has approached its planning for the short and long-term accumulation and use of institutional resources.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the School on its development of effective prioritization tools that have contributed to the thoughtful planning and execution of the plan.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the School on the success with which the School has been able to raise the funds necessary to move forward.

## Recommendation 1

The Visiting Committee shares the recommendations made by Middlesex for this standard:

1. *It is recommended that the School continue to methodically address its current deferred maintenance liability through a combination of budgeting and fundraising for deferred maintenance projects. While fundraising for these projects can be difficult, the School should emphasize its important to potential donors.*
2. *It is recommended that the School continue to mitigate the volatility and overall financial pressures that the annual defined benefit plan payment puts on the annual budget and endowment draw.*
3. *The School is already reviewing its financial aid budget needs and has increased the FA budget for FY16 by \$360K in addition to its normal percentage increase. It is recommended that the School continue to raise funds and manage its budget structure so that it can continue to increase this budget line to attract the desired caliber of students and to remain competitive with peer institutions.*
4. *It is recommended that the School continue to survey classrooms and meet with teachers and students to guide their technology needs to enhance student learning. The technology plan should be updated annually, and adequacy of financial resources should be part of this review.*

## Recommendation 2

The Visiting Committee also recommends that Middlesex consider, as part of its planning for the future, the resources that might be necessary if it were to closely study the interplay between on and off-campus housing and the related supervisory duties required of faculty and staff.

# Standard 15: The Accreditation Process

---

## Standard

The school is fully committed to institutional improvement and to the process of accreditation. The school completed an inclusive self-study, conducted in a spirit of full disclosure and following Association guidelines; responds to Commission recommendations and the requirement to meet all standards; and participates fully in the peer review process, hosting a visiting committee and sending personnel to serve on visiting committees to other institutions.

## Visiting Team's Assessment

**Passing (P1, P2):** The students' experience is supported.

**Failing (F1, F2):** The students' experience is compromised.

P1. Meets Standard: may have minor plans/recommendations or issues for reflection.

## Narrative Summary

Brief narrative summary of the school's position with regard to this standard. Text copied from the school's *Self-Study Report* is in italics.

*The committee feels that the School has embraced the Self-Study and accreditation process fully, with a strong sense of organization, inclusivity, institutional support, and transparency. Thus, the committee has voted a P1 for this standard.*

## Observations

To a man and woman, the Visiting Committee was extraordinarily impressed with Middlesex's approach to the accreditation process. There were many reasons for this sentiment. First, it was clear from the Head of School that she supported the process and sought an honest and thorough report, and committee members applauded her leadership--and noted that not every school has the good fortune to have a head who actively encourages such deep institutional reflection. Second, the work of the committee and its chair was exemplary. One committee member, a veteran of many visits, shared, "This is as good leadership as I have ever seen." Third, the candor and courage that marked the study--as seen in the willingness to confront challenges and even weaknesses, the use of surveys to solicit data, the comfort with thorny questions--was evidence of a school marked by humility and confidence in equal measure. Fourth, the level of detail and thoroughness was, frankly, astonishing. Fifth, it was obvious that many voices had been heard and many hands had been at work: this really was a community effort. Fifth, the document was written well, with a consistent voice, and with brevity where needed, and elegance when not expected. Sixth, it was obvious that there was a sense of pride and ownership, from the trustees who clearly had read the report with real interest to the junior faculty member who had served on a committee.

In short, the Visiting Committee was enormously impressed and feels that Middlesex has much to be proud of in undertaking a lengthy and challenging process with impressive cheer, energy, honesty and commitment.

And a word about the visit itself, given that it is the final, culminating exercise in the accreditation process: the Visiting Committee felt enormously grateful for the warm welcome, the attentiveness to schedule, the patience with interruptions in class visits and meetings, the eagerness to share, and the willingness to give up precious time.

## **Conclusions and Explanation of Rating**

The Visiting Committee fully supports the highest possible rating for Middlesex on the Accreditation Process, and congratulates everyone who worked on it for a job well done. The result is a credit to your colleagues and your school.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the breadth and depth of the data-gathering effort, and the courage of the community to be truly and thoughtfully self-reflective.
2. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the carefully considered and intentional method that was designed for maximum representation and effectiveness.
3. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the consideration that was given to the timing of committee work to balance with other school responsibilities.
4. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the careful methodical approach to analysis of every piece of survey and committee data, and the resulting clarity of the themes and highlights drawn forth.
5. The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex for the enormous amount of commitment demonstrated by the community to the process, the work, and to its own development.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee has no recommendations.

# Self-Study Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion

---

## Self-Study Part II

Part II asks the school to draw together what it has learned from its self-study and prioritize these ideas into a thoughtful, reflective, creative summary of the school's most significant concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future. This may include both action items and discussion items.

## Overview

Descriptive paragraphs which accurately describe the school's findings may be taken directly from the *Self-Study Report* and are in italics.

*The NEASC Two-Year Self-Study has revealed a host of strengths in the Middlesex program. Foremost among these is the centrality of the mission in the life and work of the School. There is a commitment and intentional planning towards educating the 'whole child.' There is interconnectedness within the broader program that creates multiple points of connection, both curricular and co-curricular. This intentional overlap in programming helps to reinforce the mission and values of the School and provides a rich network of student support that is built and layered upon that foundation. Weekly faculty meetings and multiple points in the year when every student is reviewed by the full faculty create a unique atmosphere of awareness that undergirds the development and support of each Middlesex student. The Standards Reports and surveys also point towards very strong leadership at the school, from the governance of the Board of Trustees, to the Head of School, the Administration, and the leadership shown by the Faculty and Staff in fulfilling the mission of the School.*

## Observations

The Self-Study Part II section of the self-study provided a very effective conclusion to the document. Like the good conclusion of an essay, it accurately reflected the main points, pulled various themes together, and left the audience with compelling direction and questions. The Visiting Committee found itself agreeing on many fronts. For instance, the "Reflections, Recommendations and Issues for Further Discussion" began with the observation that the mission was central "in the life and work of the school," and observations over three days certainly confirmed this in exciting fashion. In addition, the observation that surveys "point towards very strong leadership" was one the committee thoroughly agreed on: the board of trustees is extremely engaged and thoughtful, the Head of School is singularly effective and inspiring, the administrative team--one so involved in student life we hesitate even to call them administrators!--comprised of gifted and committed men and women, and the many others responsible for other areas of leadership (in the dorms, athletics, arts, service, multiculturalism, and so on) all very impressive. The Visiting Committee also concurred that the close and caring relationship between student and teacher was at the heart of daily life at Middlesex, and that this helps explain the warm sense of community, the obvious sharing of core values, and the health and happiness of the campus. In short, the strengths the school identified were readily apparent to the committee. At the dinner Tuesday evening, members shared stories of what had inspired them over the three days, and had anyone in the Middlesex family--board member, teacher, parent, staff, alumnus/a, Concord resident--been privy to the dinner, he or she would have left feeling what the committee did: that this is a remarkable school, successful on all fronts, led superbly and staffed with extremely competent and caring men and women, clear of its mission, asking tough questions about improvement, and doing good and important work.

The final section of the report also pointed to areas for further growth and discussion, and the Committee echoed and affirmed what the self-study identified. Clearly Middlesex is interested in asking what it means--in institutional dialogue, curriculum, enrollment, financial aid, club activity, outside speakers, etc.--to be a global and multicultural school. Our role, obviously, is not to answer that for the school, but the Committee did feel strongly that there was a terrific opportunity here for the school to articulate even more strongly and act out emphatically what it means to be a diverse 21st century school. The Two-Year and Five Year interim reports will offer an opportunity for the School to mark its progress in this conversation. This, of course, the school has stated and is committed to: we preach to the choir. In addition, the Committee thoroughly endorsed the School's commitment to meetings its financial aid and deferred maintenance goals. The Committee was fully aware that, as with all schools, this means resources (read:money), and that it was not our place to suggest goals and time tables. But we concurred that as a result of careful board planning and operations execution, these are areas that have already seen remarkable progress--and we simply affirm and congratulate on what has been accomplished and endorse the School's directions and stated aspirations. The School also has explicitly taken on questions about the issue that marks all boarding school peopled by energetic, ambitious and achieving teenagers and adults--the issue of balance: stress, work, sleep, health, and so on--and the Committee felt very strongly that the campus felt quite healthy and happy. We could not tease out successfully whether the fact that this issue was raised by Middlesex as a primary concern actually served to improve balance, or whether the policies and initiatives (for instance, in mindfulness) had improved balance, or whether our external perspective simply was different than the internal, or whether everyone put in a brave and happy front for three days (we say this in jest!)--whatever the case, the Committee observed a school that seemed to have the needle on the stress meter about where one would expect of a busy place with lots of motivated people. The Committee felt that Middlesex was a happy, healthy, humorous, fun and thriving campus. Finally, the Committee noted that the section spoke to technological literacy, it did not feel comfortable making any specific recommendation, as we felt the school had identified the upgrades and improvements, had a strong and active department with effective leadership, and was asking all the appropriate questions.

## **Conclusions**

The Visiting Committee concluded that the self-study was a superb one, the final section thorough and honest, and the ways forward clearly identified.

## **Commendations**

The Visiting Committee commends the School on the high quality of its Self-Study Part II.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee makes no recommendations on the Self-Study Part II.

# **Major Commendations and Recommendations**

---

## **Major Commendations**

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its inspiring commitment to the self-study process: for its thoroughness and attention to detail, its insistence that every member of the community be involved, and its candor and courage in identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its rare and remarkable commitment to its historic mission, a mission that is cogently and concisely expressed in the phrase "the promise within," is pervasive in all areas of school life, and is embraced enthusiastically by all members of the school.

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its faculty, whose commitment to student growth, well-being and learning was singular and inspiring--and evident at every hour and on every corner of campus.

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its happy, healthy and vibrant student culture.

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for its effective strategic planning, especially in the areas of financial aid and deferred maintenance, and the successful execution of the stated goals and priorities.

The Visiting Committee commends Middlesex School for the extraordinary quality and competence of its people, on the faculty and staff, from rookie teacher to seasoned veteran, from classroom to facilities, from Elliot to Clay, and from the field to the stage.

## **Major Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue its commitment to increasing financial aid, in real and percentage dollars, in order to meet its enrollment goals and aspirations.

## **Major Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue its thoughtful and strategic approach to addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance through careful board and school planning, judicious prioritizing, increased budget allocation, and efficient execution.

## **Major Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue its robust, informed and thoughtful conversation about diversity--and what it means to be a multicultural institution with a global perspective.



## **Major Recommendation 4**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School continue to explore the role of athletics at the school by engaging the self-study proposed task force in a vigorous, collaborative and informed discussion about school identity, philosophy, values, and practices.

# Ratings Table

---

## Ratings Table

For each applicable standard, please:

1. Enter the school's self-rating and the visiting team's rating in the first two columns.
2. Enter an X in the column for "Failed Rating" if the visiting committee's rating is an F1 or F2.
3. Enter an X in "Differing Rating" if the visiting committee's rating differs from the school's self-rating.
4. Enter an X in the last column to indicate that you have provided evidence for a failed or differing rating within the text of the *Visiting Committee Report*.

Skip any standards which do not apply.

	School's Self-Rating	VC Rating	Failed Rating?	Differing Rating?	Evidence Provided for Failed/Differing Rating?
Standard 1: Mission	P1	P1			
Standard 2: Governance	P1	P1			
Standard 3: Enrollment	P1	P1			
Standard 4: Program	P2	P2			
Standard 5: Experience of the Students	P1	P1			
Standard 6: Resources to Support the Program	P1	P1			
Standard 7: Early Childhood Program					
Standard 8: Residential Program and/or Homestay Program	P1	P1			
Standard 9: Faculty	P1	P1			
Standard 10: Administration	P1	P1			
Standard 11: Evaluation and Assessment	P1	P1			
Standard 12: Health and Safety	P1	P1			
Standard 13: Communication	P1	P1			
Standard 14: Infrastructure	P2	P2			
Standard 15: The Accreditation Process	P1	P1			