



Harford County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Edgewood Learning Community Earns Middle States Accreditation

First feeder system in the nation to pursue and receive this status

During the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, the Edgewood Learning Community (ELC), comprised of Edgewood High, Edgewood Middle, Abingdon Elementary, William Paca/Old Post Road Elementary, Edgewood Elementary and Deerfield Elementary schools, participated in a rigorous self-study process in preparation for Middle States Accreditation from the Commission on Secondary Schools (CSS).

Accreditation is the educational community's means of self-regulation and affirms that a school provides a quality of education that the community has a right to expect and the education world endorses. The accreditation process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of education, making it worthy of public confidence. When CSS accredits a school, it certifies that the school has met the prescribed qualitative standards of the Middle States Association within the terms of the school's own stated philosophy and objectives.

The stakeholder group that participated in this self-study was comprised of parents, community members, teachers, administrators and Harford County Public Schools central office personnel. The group worked tirelessly for two years to identify areas of strength and develop a plan to ensure continued growth in each of the 12 specified areas: Philosophy and Mission, Governance and Leadership, School Improvement Planning, Finances, Facilities, School Climate and Organization, Health and Safety, Educational Program, Assessment and Evidence of Learning, Student Services, Student Life and Student Activities, and Information Resources and Technology.

As a result of the self-study process, two objectives were identified to serve as the focus of a seven-year plan:

- All students in the Edgewood Learning Community will be academically competent and be able to apply knowledge, as measured by meeting or exceeding the Harford County Public Schools and Maryland State Department of Education requirements and standards, by 2014.
- All students in the Edgewood Learning Community will be academically confident and be able to apply knowledge independently to life experiences beyond high school.

In addition, the ELC identified a profile of a graduate that reflects the essential characteristics of every student who graduates from an ELC school: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, leaders, balanced and reflective. This profile has become a part of the regular dialogue of every ELC student as early as pre-kindergarten.

In May 2009, the schools in the ELC were visited by an international team of educators from the CSS to see firsthand the work that the schools had done to ensure a quality pre-k-12 education for all students. Following this visit, the Edgewood Learning Community was awarded full accreditation. This certification recognizes

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the quality programming, highly qualified staff and vast array of resources available to students attending Edgewood schools.

The ELC is the first feeder system in the nation to pursue and receive Middle States Accreditation, and the work of these six schools has laid the groundwork for future feeder systems to use the Middle States Accreditation process. When teachers and administrators from all of the schools in a feeder system work together to create aligned programs, expectations and seamless transitions from elementary school to middle school to high school, the benefit to students is great.

“This challenging, two-year process was a visionary opportunity for these six schools to work together to chart the future of the Edgewood feeder system,” said Board of Education President Mark Wolkow. “This accomplishment truly speaks to the dedication our school personnel and community stakeholders have to the Edgewood learning community.”

Typically, once accreditation is earned, it is renewed on a seven-year cycle that involves an intensive self-study process conducted by the school, an on-site, three-day visit by a team of professional educators, and on-site mid-point reviews in the form of a one-day, one-person visit. The Edgewood Learning Community is accredited until 2016.

The HCPS Board of Education will formally recognize these schools this evening at the Board of Education meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the A. A. Roberty Building in Bel Air.

The Commission on Secondary Schools is one of three commissions that function within the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and was established in November 1920 to promote the improvement of secondary education and to secure better coordination and understanding between secondary schools and institutions of higher education. For more information, visit www.css-msa.org.

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