ACSI ACCREDITED

ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

REACH

School Administrator's Handbook

for EE–12 North American and International Schools

Reaching for **E**xcellence Through **A**ccreditation and **C**ontinuous Improvement for **H**igher Achievement

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Association of Christian Schools International
REACH: Standards manual for accreditation for EE–12 North American and international schools

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Letter of Introduction

Dear Administrator:

Congratulations and best wishes to you as you begin your accreditation journey with ACSI. This handbook has been prepared to assist you in the process as you:

- plan and prepare for completing the self-study;
- make assignments for staff, faculty, and board;
- make arrangements for a team visit;
- fill out all appropriate forms.

An **Administrator's Checklist** has been designed and included as well.

ACSI accreditation is a process of recognizing and assessing educational institutions for their standards, performance, integrity, and quality. ACSI accreditation is an ongoing process of continuous school improvement and institutional development by constantly and consistently striving for educational and spiritual excellence.

Schools that commit to striving for excellence through accreditation are agreeing to a process of ongoing review to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the organization and quality of instruction for the population it serves.

May the Lord bless you and your entire school constituencies as you work together toward this goal.

The Accreditation Process

Prior to making application for ACSI accreditation, the school should have carefully reviewed the accreditation standards and process. Meeting the Standards requires a strong commitment by the board, faculty, staff, and school community.

The following steps outline the accreditation process:

1. Application

The completed application should be returned to the regional office with the application fee and a copy of the board minutes indicating approval for the school to pursue accreditation with ACSI.

Some schools may wish to undergo a joint accreditation with ACSI and another accrediting agency. ACSI does have cooperative accreditation agreements with other regional agencies. If a school desires to proceed with a joint accreditation plan, a statement to that effect, which also names the other accrediting agency, should be included in the initial letter of inquiry the school sends to the ACSI regional office. Application must be made separately to each accreditation agency involved.

It should be noted that a joint accreditation may involve an alteration of some of the processes described in this document.

2. Candidate Status Visit

Once the accreditation application has been received in the regional office, the school will be contacted to establish a date for a candidacy visit. The purpose of this visit is to determine whether or not the school can meet the accreditation standards, complete the self-study, and host a visiting committee within a three-year period. It is also a time for administrators and staff to have their questions answered about the accreditation process and timeline. The purpose of the visit is twofold:

1) For ACSI to gain sufficient knowledge of the school and assess its suitability and readiness for accreditation. In order to accomplish this objective, a regional office representative will make a one-day visit to determine the extent to which:

   - The school has a clearly formulated Christian educational philosophy and set of objectives
   - There is evidence the school will be able to meet the accreditation Standards (see *Standards/Indicator Checklist*)
   - The school staff is adequate for the school's operation
   - The instructional program demonstrates cultural sensitivity and effectively implements the school's philosophy and objectives
   - The school has sound organizational procedures
   - The school ensures that the services it provides meet acceptable standards of health, safety, and comfort, fulfilling all applicable legal requirements
   - Instructional resources are adequate and appropriate to fulfill the school's program
   - The school grounds and buildings are adequate for the support of the total school program
   - The financial resources and management of the school are capable of sustaining a sound educational program consistent with its stated philosophy and objectives

2) To prepare the school for the self-study process and the subsequent evaluation by the visiting team. In order to accomplish this objective, the regional office representative will:

   - Review the entire self-study process with the administration, faculty, school board, and other appropriate constituents
   - Review all standard practices with the administration to ensure everyone understands all expectations
   - Establish a proposed timeline for the accomplishment of the steps in the process
   - Inform the school of any areas of operation which are seriously deficient and suggest improvements that should be made during the candidacy period

It will be helpful for the representative if the school can provide him/her in advance of arrival with as much documentation as possible to assist in the inquiry.

The *Standards/Indicator Checklist* should be completed by the school at least two weeks prior to the candidacy visit and emailed to the appropriate regional office. Please note that this is a first cursory overview, and the school may not be meeting all the standards completely for the candidacy visit—this is the starting point. Once candidate status has been granted, the school will receive official notification from the ACSI regional office and a consultant will be assigned to work with the school.

3. **Consultant**
   The consultant assigned to the school has been trained in the many components of the ACSI accreditation protocol. The consultant serves as a resource person throughout the self-study process. All expenses incurred by the consultant in serving the school are paid by the school for renewals and crosswalk visits. Candidacy visit expenses are included in the application fee.
4. **Team Visit**
   Upon completion of the self-study, a committee of Christian school educators and administrators is scheduled to visit the school. The number of committee members depends on the size of the school, the number of grades, and the number of campuses involved. The chairperson of the team will notify the school with the names of the team members and their schools. The school agrees to the members proposed by the chairperson. The length of the visit is approximately three and a half days. The school is responsible for all the expenses of travel and of hosting the visiting committee members.
5. **Regional Accreditation Commission**
   At the conclusion of the visit, the team's report will be forwarded to the ACSI Regional office. The report will be reviewed at the next meeting of the ACSI Regional Accreditation Commission. The school is then notified of the Commission's decision.
6. **On-Going School Improvement**
   Submit an *Annual Report* to the regional office. Administrators will also be responsible for submitting the name(s) of faculty members who they deem would be effective accreditation team members. This is an important part of the accreditation process and is a way for faculty members to participate in professional development through the accreditation process.

Checklist for the School Administrator

A. Initial Application

1. Secure a copy of the *REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation.*
2. Review the Standards and Indicators for ACSI Accreditation.
   a. All critical indicators must be met prior to a team visit.
   b. ACSI K–12 administrator and faculty certification requirements.
   c. If needed, obtain ACSI certification application forms from the ACSI website at **www.acsi.org**.
3. Submit application for accreditation to ACSI Headquarters.
   a. Include fee.
   b. Attach a copy of board resolution indicating interest in participating in ACSI's program of accreditation.
   c. Indicate grades, enrollment, and location of school site(s) to be covered by accreditation.

B. Candidacy Visit (After Initial Application)

Approximately 3 years prior to an accreditation visit:

YEAR 1: After the candidacy application has been accepted, the regional office will assign a consultant for the accreditation process. In the international context, a teleconference may need to be used to determine candidacy status.

Communicate with the consultant and arrange for him/her to visit the school.

Complete the *Standards/Indicators Checklist* and then review the results with the consultant.

Schedule the approximate month of team visit for accreditation team in Year 3.

YEAR 2: The consultant may schedule a second visit with the school to review the *Standards/Indicators Checklist* to make sure the school is still on schedule for the team visit.

This is a good time to review the certification chart to make sure that requirements will be able to be met by the time of the visit.

For international schools, certification requirements are different and should be discussed with the consultant.

YEAR 3: Be prepared for a visit from the consultant in the last 4–6 months. If the consultant becomes the chairperson, that visit may happen by teleconference, depending on his/her familiarity with the school. If the chairperson of the visiting team is different than the consultant, that visit is likely to be in person.

C. Preparing For Accreditation—The Work of The Self-Study (For Initial and Renewal Visits)

18 months prior to the accreditation visit:

1. Appoint a chairperson for the **Steering Committee**.

   The head of school may desire to be the chairperson or prefer to appoint another administrator or teacher/leader for this important role. This person needs to be detail-oriented and able to organize people to complete tasks. (See the Steering Committee Guide on page 10.) The leader and members of the steering committee will put in many long hours. It is incumbent on the head of school to show appreciation for their commitment and personal sacrifice.

   The steering committee should consist of the school administration and all subcommittee chairs (if different from administrators).

   The steering committee generally serves as the editorial committee for the self-study, but the committee's time will be spent best in thinking carefully about the responses submitted for each standard. The chairperson of each subcommittee for the self-study sections should be the first line of quality control in this process. Nothing less than a high-quality effort should be acceptable.

   The steering committee should plan on meeting at regular intervals to evaluate the responses of the subcommittees and ensure things are progressing in a timely manner.

2. Develop a timeline with the Steering Committee Chair (use a task-management software or Excel worksheet). The timeline should include the following components:
   a. Beginning date of the self-study
   b. Meeting dates of steering and subcommittees (most schools find monthly meetings are helpful)
   c. Deadline for preliminary data and documentation gathering
   d. Dates for initial subcommittee reports to steering committee
   e. Final date for revisions of committee reports by steering committee

f. Date for evidence to be finalized and organized by Standard and Indicator (first by committees and then reviewed by steering committee)

g. Final date for completion of self-study report (by chair of steering committee and those editing)

h. Date for the reading of the self-study report to the faculty and board

3. Appoint subcommittees with at least 2–3 people serving on each committee. Involve board members, faculty, support staff, and parents where appropriate:
   - one for each standard of the instrument (1–8); small schools may need to combine committees.
   - logistics of the visit (travel, housing, meals, hospitality, workroom, technology, other logistics)
   - student performance data analysis, and interpretation
   - survey administration, collection, analysis, and interpretation
4. If the school is involved in a dual accreditation process, review the joint accrediting agency's criteria and complete any accreditation supplement that may be required. The consultant and the regional office can assist with these details and forms.
5. Complete the self-study using the *REACH Self-Study Word Template* and upload into the ACSI ePlatform (due 6 weeks prior to the visit).

D. Preparing for The Visit

1. **Twelve (12) months prior** to the visit, work with the consultant and the regional office to schedule the dates of the visit.

   a. **Four to six (4–6) months prior** to the visit, work with the consultant to schedule his/her visit. This may be by teleconference if the consultant feels that is appropriate. He/she needs to verify to the regional office that the school is indeed on schedule to host a visiting team.

   b. At that time, review the *Standards/Indicators Checklist*, making sure to note any item that is not yet in compliance. Any item that is not in full compliance should be communicated and agreed upon by the visiting team chair. (If in process, it may be reflected in the major recommendations depending on severity.)

   c. Request any needed assistance from your chairperson while conducting your school's self-study.

   d. The consultant may request a meeting or video conference with steering committee.

   e. He/she may request to see sample sections of the self-study to make sure the report is being completed as designed.

2. **Twelve (12) weeks prior** to the visit, be prepared to confirm with the chairperson that the steering committee and the subcommittees are ready for the visit:

   a. Provide assurance that the self-study will be completed on time, evidence is well-organized, etc.

   b. Ask any necessary questions prior to the team's arrival (special needs, allergies, etc.).

   c. Work with consultant to prepare tentative schedule for the visiting team.

   d. Confirm travel/accommodation arrangements for team members.

3. **Eight (8) weeks prior** to the visit:

   a. Communicate hotel, transportation, and meal arrangements, etc.

   b. Furnish campus layout, bell schedules, rosters, etc.

   c. Confirm the location of workroom for the team, including technology setup.

   d. Finalize schedule with details for interviews, meetings, room assignments, etc.

4. **Six (6) weeks prior** to the visit, submit the completed self-study as directed:
   Follow the directions from your USA regional or Global office as to any other copies that need to be submitted (if dually accredited).
   Please note: The visiting chairperson may ask to see sample sections of the self-study to make sure the report is being completed as designed. He/she may check with the steering committee periodically to make sure the process is on schedule. If the school administrator or steering committee needs help at any time, the consultant/chairperson is the best resource on how to complete the self-study, organize evidence, and respond to situations which are not covered in the manual.

E. The Visit

1. Plan to host the team as your coworkers. Treat them as friendly, helpful colleagues who are on campus to assist in improving your school.
2. Do not plan time-consuming events such as special student programs, other than regular chapel, which may hinder the work of the team. Continue a normal schedule during the visit. It is important that faculty be actively engaged with students on the days the visiting team is present. There should be no test taking, videos being shown, field trips scheduled, etc. Classroom observations make up a significant part of the on-campus portion of the visit.

3. The team appreciates having lunch on campus. Some schools choose to have one evening meeting with the board as a dinner on campus. That saves travel time and is usually a shorter event than a restaurant meal. Other evening meals are usually working dinners just for the team.
4. School administrators do not attend the meetings with the team when they are talking with the board, parents, students, and teachers. Those meetings are meant to be times when the constituent groups can openly share their views of what is happening at the school. These are not conducted in such a way to encourage complaining. Constituents are usually asked all types of questions including what they like, what could improve, etc. Specific questions will be asked to verify the team's findings in order to gain further evidence that what they see on paper is what really happens for students, parents, and faculty.
5. The team needs the privacy of a workroom which is separate from the faculty room or the school library, It must be equipped with Internet access, a projector, and plenty of electrical outlets.
6. While most evidence should be available to teams electronically prior to the visit, there may be some items that need to be viewed while on-site. Examples might be student work or textbooks. Those can be displayed in the team workroom. Confidential items such as personnel or financial files can be left where they are normally housed and the team member responsible will go to that location to view them.
7. Coffee, tea, drinks, and snacks should be made available to the team in the workroom.
8. If possible, reimburse the expenses of the visiting team before they leave the campus.
9. On the last day of the visit, the team chairperson will read the team commendations and recommendations to the head of school and other members of the administration as he/she requests. This is for clarification and not for significant changes to be made in the report.
10. Before the team leaves the school, an exit report will be shared with the school staff and invited guests. Sometimes the school chooses to celebrate and congratulate their staff for a job well done even though they do not have the final outcome in hand.

F. Following The Visit

1. A final copy of the visiting team report will be available to the school approximately three (3) weeks after the visit.
2. The school self-study report and the visiting team report will be submitted to the appropriate ACSI Regional Commission for its upcoming meeting. Following the meeting of the commission, the school will be notified regarding its accreditation status.
3. Accredited schools receive an ACSI certificate signifying the accreditation of the school.
4. If a midterm visit is required, that will be communicated by the regional commission. Typically, it is a one day visit with a two-member team. Some regions require these visits and others do not.
5. An annual report is required of each accredited school.

Steering Committee Guide

The Steering Committee is the management team for the accreditation process at the school. They provide the organization and inspiration for staff members as they tackle the complex process of accreditation. Each member should view accreditation as integral to the ongoing process of school improvement and count it a privilege to serve their school in this way. Since service on this committee takes extra time and energy, it is important that the committee understands the significance of their task. It is imperative they commit to regular attendance, meeting deadlines, and praying for the school throughout the process.

It is hoped that this description of duties will provide a framework of the who, what, and how of the accreditation process.

Committees

Steering Committee:

All Administrative Leadership

Each Subcommittee Chairperson

Standard Subcommittees:

A subcommittee for each of the eight Standards should be established with at least 3–4 members. Within Standard 5, each school division should be represented on the committee and all faculty should be expected to contribute when asked for information, sample work, lesson plans, etc. Involve board members, faculty, staff, and parents where appropriate. In small schools, subcommittees may be combined as necessary.

Logistics and Hospitality Committees:

These committees will be in charge of making the arrangements for the visiting team.

Student Performance and Survey Administration Committees:

Schools find it helpful to have committees dedicated to these two areas to collect, analyze, and interpret both the student performance (test results) and the survey information (collected from students, staff, parents and alumni).

Work Assignments for the Self-Study Subcommittees

The most beneficial part of the accreditation process is what the school learns about itself through the self-study, which is conducted by subcommittees that review, analyze, and evaluate every area of the school's program. The *REACH: Standards Accreditation Manual* and the *REACH Rubrics Manual* provide direction for the subcommittees throughout the process. (See *Appendix D*, *E*, *F*, & *G* for details in completing the self-study from the *REACH Manual*). Because there is great value in the self-assessment process, it is crucial that all the faculty and administration have a role in the self-study process. With a large number of subcommittees and the ability to put a number of faculty on the subject area subcommittees for Standard 5, it is hoped that every staff member would have ownership in the process. Involvement produces a staff that is invested in accomplishing the goals that they have had a part in setting.

The steering committee begins by:

1. Developing a timeline for the following activities. (Project-management software or a spreadsheet works well.)
2. Setting regular meeting dates. (Most schools find that monthly meeting dates are helpful.)
3. Establishing deadlines for all the functions listed below.

Guide for the Subcommittees:

1. Read through the Standards and Indicators from the *REACH Standards Manual*.
2. Review the "Required Documentation" and "Supporting Evidence" listed at the end of each Standard in the *REACH Standards Manual*. Determine for each area what additional evidence (if any) is necessary to provide a concise, yet complete and accurate response. The subcommittee should not assume that what is put forth in the curriculum, policies, and documents of the school is what is actually experienced by the students.
   This can be done by taking surveys, interviewing constituents, reviewing course evaluations, examining student work, analyzing test scores, and other methods of verifying that the planned activities are accomplishing the desired outcomes.
3. On the basis of its determination of "what is," the subcommittee takes into consideration its findings along with the school's Christian philosophy, statement of objectives, learning expectations, and schoolwide expected student outcomes. The subcommittee determines "what should be" by comparing each area to the *REACH Rubrics Manual*. The subcommittee seeks to reach consensus on what rating is most appropriate. If agreement is not reached, the subcommittee determines what additional evidence is needed and seeks to obtain consensus.
4. The final portion of each self-study section asks the subcommittee to identify areas of strengths and where improvements are most needed. A narrative response will be required for these sections. The process should be managed by the subcommittee chairperson so that there is a variety of input, discussion, and suggestions before the report is finalized and submitted.
   a. The subcommittee indicates, based on the evidences examined, whether it believes the accreditation standard for the section is being met by the school and can continue to be met during the accreditation period.

b. The subcommittee identifies the areas of greatest strength and the most needed improvements based on the evidence reviewed. This list must be supportable from the responses provided in the subcommittee's report.

5. The subcommittee's report, including the ratings and the narrative section, is submitted to the steering committee for its review. The *School Indicator Ratings Spreadsheet* is provided to help the Steering Committee come to consensus on the ratings. Once they have all been submitted by the subcommittees they are to be transferred to the Self-Study.
6. The steering committee evaluates the report for accuracy, completeness, and thoroughness. The report is edited for readability and transferred into the ePlatform.
7. Once approved by the steering committee, the report is reviewed by the full faculty and board. Their suggestions are reviewed and incorporated, if appropriate.
8. The steering committee then finalizes the report and the data that is to be submitted with the report. The data is to be clearly labeled according to what standard or section of the self-study it addresses.
9. The report and the data are to be submitted at least six weeks prior to the visit.

Please note: The visiting team chairperson may ask to see sample sections of the self-study to make sure the report is being completed as designed. He/she may also check with the steering committee periodically to make sure that the process is on schedule. That may involve a visit, a telephone call to the chair, or a teleconference. Feel free to request help from the consultant/chairperson at any time during the self-study process. He/she is the school's best resource on how to complete the self-study, organize evidence, and respond to situations that are not covered in the manual. If there are features unique to a region or international setting, the consultant/chairperson will help with those as well.

Special Instructions for Standard 5 (Instructional Program—Part A & B)

The steering committee will generally complete one introductory section for each school division (elementary, middle school, high school) for the Instructional Program—Part A in Standard 5.

For Part B, in the elementary school, groups of teachers will complete the sections for every subject, such as Bible, language arts, reading/phonics, math, science, social studies, classic/modern languages, art, music, physical education, kindergarten, and computer. In the early education program, teachers will typically be assigned to review all curricular plans for a specific age group (toddlers, four-year-olds, etc.).

For Part B, in the junior high/middle school and high school, each department will complete a section. This work will include subjects such as English, Bible, math, science, social studies, classic/modern languages, fine arts, computer, and physical education. Schools may consider forming interdisciplinary subcommittees to promote improved understanding of objectives (including school-wide objectives), methodologies, priorities, and perspectives between departments.

Early education programs naturally tend to implement the curricular plans in an interdisciplinary fashion (content delivery across subject areas). Some regional accrediting agencies will expect this process in a joint accreditation effort.

Hosting an Accreditation Team—Hospitality and Logistics

For schools seeking accreditation, the climactic experience is the team visit. The team arrives on site with the desire to serve the host school well and to accomplish a credible job that will ultimately lead to school improvement. In order to facilitate the work of the team, the host school should enhance the setting as much as possible for the team members. While these matters may appear trivial, it is appropriate to show appreciation since each visiting team member is a volunteer, made arrangements to leave their own school, and will be working long hours while they are assisting the host school in this way. Doing everything possible to facilitate their work actually helps the visit go more smoothly.

It is not important to spend beyond what is financially reasonable. However, it is crucial for the host school to allocate sufficient funds to accomplish the process of accreditation in a professional and warm manner. Hosting the accreditation team is of key importance in the accreditation process.

Hosting the team includes pre-visit contact, on-site consideration, and post-visit communication. The following is a suggested guide:

I. Pre-visit contact—Prior to the visit, the host school can do a great deal to orient the team and establish rapport that will prepare the way for a successful on-site visit.

1. Each team member needs to be informed of lodging and travel arrangements as well as contact information for the school. Names, addresses, and phone numbers are important for team members and their families. Often a cell phone number is included in case a team member has trouble at the airport or while traveling by car.
2. When possible, it is best to provide privacy for each team member when making lodging arrangements. It is often necessary to work late into the night or get up very early to complete the necessary work. This can be accomplished much more efficiently when each team member has a private room.
3. Usually one person at the school is responsible for communicating with all team members about their travel schedules, mode of travel, and arrival times to avoid confusion. Team members may be asked to arrange flights up to two months in advance to ensure the best

price. If the visiting team chairperson is handling those arrangements, make sure that is clear. Encourage the team members to let the administration know if they have any special needs which might be met.

4. Because the team members have a considerable amount of work to do in preparation for the visit, it is best that team members not be asked to wait long at the airport while other flights are arriving. If arrival times are an hour or more apart or arriving in different terminals, it would be helpful if faculty members could be assigned to meet the flights individually.
5. The school administration should send a welcome letter expressing appreciation for the team members being willing to serve the school.
6. The Steering Committee Chair and the visiting team chairperson work together to finalize the schedule with details for interviews and meetings, including times and room assignments for each event. The team will need opportunities to interview students, parents, board members, pastors, administrators, and other key people. When a group of students or parents is interviewed, the group should represent a good sampling of individuals. Team members do not want a staged, perfect group. They want a cross section that will share open and honest feedback about the school. The meetings with students often happen in conjunction with a noon meal. Meetings with parents may happen with coffee first thing in the morning. Administrators do not attend those meetings with the team.

II. On-site consideration

1. The board, faculty, staff, students, and parents of the school should be oriented prior to the visit. Host school personnel need to feel comfortable with the visit and know that they should talk openly with team members. The visiting team chairperson may be able to lay the groundwork for the on-site visit during the consultation visits.

   Make sure teachers know what to expect so that they feel comfortable when a team member is in their classroom. If teachers know that the team member is looking at the overall learning experience and not evaluating them as a teacher, that is helpful.

   It is best to place a chair near the door so the team member can move in and out of the room easily without distracting the students. Leaving a copy of the lesson plan on the chair works well for many schools.

2. The host school will need to orient the visiting team to its campus. This is vitally important because it can help make the team feel welcome and make sure they find the people and rooms they need. Here are some possibilities to provide this orientation (work with the team chairperson to decide):
   a. Arrange for a tour of facilities the day the team arrives.
   b. Plan an initial meeting with board and key staff on the first afternoon or evening the team arrives on the campus. During this time, a brief history and purpose of the school can be given. The team chairperson could present remarks that will explain the role of the team and help the school understand the accreditation process better.
   c. Provide an informal get-acquainted time with the faculty before school the first morning. The team chairperson may address the faculty briefly and each team member can introduce themselves.
   d. Provide name tags for team members and host school faculty. Make sure the print is large enough to be easily read.
   e. Large signs or even student guides could be available in the hallways.
   f. Some schools make sure that student work is prominently on display so that evidence of student learning is visible throughout the school.
3. A private workroom (conference room or something similar) must be available to the team at the school. The workroom should have Internet access, an available projector, multiple electrical outlets, and a stockpile of basic office supplies. Having the school's tech person available to connect laptops to the network is very important when the team first comes on-site.

   The team chairperson should work with the Steering Committee Chair ahead of time to approve the size and location of the workspace.

   Drinks and snacks are much appreciated by the team members and should be made available in the meeting room. This is an inexpensive way to show appreciation for the long hours of work accomplished over these days. This is an excellent way for parent volunteers to be involved.

4. While most evidence should be available to teams electronically prior to the visit, there may be some items that need to be viewed while onsite. Examples might be student work or textbooks. Those can be displayed in the team workroom or nearby. Confidential items such as personnel or financial files can be left where they are normally housed and the team member responsible will go to that location to view them.

5. Meals may be arranged at the hotel, host school, or local restaurants. It is best to have lunches provided at the school since it is too time consuming for the team to leave. It is also a great convenience to the team if a continental breakfast can be provided at the hotel (or host school). For evening meals, it is helpful to dine out at local restaurants or the hotel. Please make reservations in advance and also make arrangements regarding a payment plan. The time factor is an important element to consider when making reservations. Some schools choose to have one evening meeting with the board involving dinner on campus. That saves travel time and is usually a shorter event than a restaurant meal.
6. If many members have traveled by air, provide transportation to and from the hotel and restaurants. Most teams have enough members who drive their own vehicles which will alleviate this concern. Their mileage will be submitted for reimbursement.
7. It is essential for team members to be able to find teachers and classrooms easily during the visit, so provide a map/site plan of the facilities, bell schedule, roster, etc. Arrange for team members to have access to classrooms and hallways if they are normally kept locked.
8. Class schedules should be made available to team members ahead of time to facilitate classroom observations. These can be available upon their arrival at the hotel or sent electronically along with the evidence. This will allow them to adequately plan their classroom visitation schedule. It is important for teachers to stick to their schedules. Please remind the teachers that tests, field trips, and videos should not be included in the lesson plans during the team visit. There should not be special events or programs planned other than a regular chapel day.
9. If possible, arrange for reimbursement for the expenses of the visiting team before they leave the campus.
10. On the last day of the visit, the visiting team works in their workroom for the majority of the day to finalize the report. At some point, the chair and assistant chair meet with the school's leadership team to review a draft of the report. This is primarily for clarification.
11. Before the team leaves the school, an exit report will be shared with the school staff and invited guests. This is often in an auditorium with a projector. Sometimes the school chooses to celebrate and congratulate their staff for a job well done even though they do not have the final outcome in hand.

III. Post-visit communication—If the school desires, about a week after the on-site visit has been completed, it is appropriate for the head of school or another key person to communicate a word of thanks to each team member. The expression of appreciation and gratitude is always welcome and will serve as a seal to a successful and rewarding experience.

Preparing the Faculty and Staff for the Team Visit

The more the school administrator has done to prepare the school staff, faculty and board members for the accreditation visit, the more effective the visit. Following are a few suggestions:

1. From the very beginning of the process (even before the self-study has been started) everyone should be informed of the requirements as well as the procedures for achieving accreditation. This includes the inviting of a competent, experienced team of Christian school teachers and administrators to the campus. The consultant can assist with this in the candidacy visit.
2. The purpose of the team visit should also be made clear.
   a. To validate the school's self-study. That is, to confirm that the strengths and weaknesses which are set forth by the school in the self-study are affirmed by the on-site visit (conference, interviews, observations, etc.).
   b. To determine if school policies, procedures and programs are in accordance with the school's purpose and mission and meet the standards for an accredited school.
   c. To determine whether the school is making the best use of its resources; the visiting team will not attempt to change the direction or purposes of the school or to compare the school with other accredited schools.
3. It is good to remind the staff that team members come desiring to be helpful. They are brothers and sisters in Christ and professional colleagues with similar interests and goals who come from other accredited schools.
4. Challenge the staff to pray for the team members, even months before the team comes to the campus.
5. The staff should know in advance who the team members will be and the schools they represent.
6. Be sure the teachers know it is "school as usual" when the team is on campus. It is very important for the teachers to adhere to the daily teaching schedule which has been given to the team. No special programs are to be developed or special classroom preparations need to be made. Team members want to see typical classrooms and typical lessons. However, giving tests, showing films or any other special events are inappropriate for the days the team visits.
7. The teachers should know that the goal will be to briefly observe every classroom. The purpose is not to evaluate individual teachers but to get an impression of the learning environment and student engagement. No teacher's name will appear in the report.
8. The teachers and office staff may expect to be briefly interviewed individually and/or collectively.
9. Request teachers to explain the visit to their students so they too will know why visitors are on the campus.
10. Encourage the staff to participate in the fellowship or refreshment times to get to know the team members. This greatly helps to lessen the tension as they perceive the genuine, sincere interest of the team members.
11. Encourage the staff to share freely and honestly with the team and to be as cordial as possible since this free and open dialogue is what will make the accreditation process work. Again, remind the staff that all discussions are confidential and no names appear in the report.
12. Be sure your staff knows that the quality and completeness of the self-study is the key to the visit. The visiting team report is based upon the self-study and evidences and will guide the team members in the evaluation process.
13. It would be good for the staff to know that the visit will result in a written report in which the team, collectively, will make commendations and recommendations on each section of the self-study and that the purpose of this report is to give an objective appraisal upon which future goals can be set by the school staff, administrators, and board.

ACSI Policies for Visiting Team Expenses

The ACSI Board of Directors has established the following practice regarding reimbursement of travel expenses.*

1. All air travel must be approved in advance by the team chairperson and the school administrator. When flying, it is expected that team members will fly at the lowest discount rate using airline-imposed restrictions such as the following:
   a. Booking tickets which must be purchased a certain number of days in advance (currently, 30 days in advance, but this varies with each airline and with the seasons of the year).
   b. No changes may be made in the flight schedule.
2. Reimbursement will be paid based on the least expensive rate between the comparisons of the lowest airline discount rate, plus parking at the airport and the appropriate mileage rate for driving, plus meals en route.
3. When driving, reimbursement will be at the current IRS per mile rate. It is the chair person's duty to find the current IRS rate from HQ or the regional office. If the team member is stopping for other business en route, the cost of reimbursement will be shared and the school will pay its prorated share.
4. Car rental requires advance authorization by the chairperson and the school.
5. Original receipts are required.
6. Expenses which will not be reimbursed include items not directly related to ACSI business, such as telephone calls, meals for family members and guests, entertainment, etc. Team members should ask the hotel to separate those expenses from the final bill so the team member can pay for them personally.

*Use of an ACSI alternate accreditation protocol, endorsement protocol, or addendum may require ACSI to add visiting team members with specialized training, knowledge, or experience that would need to travel from a greater distance than team members on a traditional REACH visiting team. Reasonable travel expenses would need to be accounted for accordingly and reimbursed by the school.

Sample Standards Section of School Self-Study

Sample Christian School (SCS)

Section One – Philosophy and Foundations

Noncompliance:
The trait or quality in the indicator does not exist or is not in practice.

Partial Compliance:
The trait or quality is observed but not consistently. Policies may be in writing but not followed or practiced. Training is inconsistent. This area needs some improvement to be at the desired level.

Compliance:
The trait or quality is consistently in practice by the school. Written policies are regularly reviewed. Practices comply with the indicator in quality. Training for ongoing development is evident. A systematic review process has been developed.

Exceeds Compliance:
Trait or quality is consistent across levels and faculty. Staff go above and beyond requirements. Results are documented, evaluated, and used for school improvement. Related policies are regularly reviewed, carefully implemented, and updated as needed. Training for development is ongoing.

Standard One

The school has developed written statements of philosophy, vision, mission, beliefs, core values, schoolwide expected student outcomes, as well as a statement of faith. These statements are well defined, systematically reviewed, and broadly implemented throughout the school. They outline the school's Christian distinctives and communicate a clear purpose and direction for school effectiveness and student growth and development.

INDICATORS:

1.1 The statement of faith, philosophy, vision, mission, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcomes statements of the school are established and are reviewed regularly and systematically in a collaborative manner. (C)

1.2 The school communicates its philosophy, vision, mission, core values statements, and schoolwide expected student outcomes to its constituents and community. (C)

1.3 The philosophy statement consistently applies as an integrative, coordinating, and examining device throughout all aspects of the programs, operations, and curriculum. (C)

1.4 The executive leadership, faculty, and staff continually support the advancement of the philosophy, vision, and mission of the school. (C)

1.5 From a distinctively Christian perspective, all staff demonstrate a commitment to the development of the whole child—spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social (Luke 2:52). (C)

Indicator #	Non-compliance	Partial compliance	Compliance	Exceeds compliance
1.1				X
1.2				X
1.3				X
1.4			X	
1.5			X	

BRIEF NARRATIVE: Give a two to three paragraph explanation of how you are meeting the Standard, or what is hindering you from meeting it, and your plans for attainment (use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation).

At the time of the last accreditation, the SCS school board and administrative leadership realized the need for more frequent review of the school's foundational documents. The first fall retreat for the board after the accreditation visit was entirely devoted to this. It was at this time that the leadership decided to increase the scope of who it was serving.

After review, they did not change the mission of the school. They did, however, slightly change the vision of the school and it became more all-encompassing. The leadership had a vision for less fortunate in the community and students coming from around the world who didn't know Christ. This change in focus caused minor changes in the philosophy statement and the expected student outcomes. Some policies were changed as well to give more flexibility to the superintendent in admitting students whose parents were not Christians. This had occurred prior to five years ago but as the leadership reviewed their policies, they realized this practice went against the strict policies which were in place.

SCS has made a conscious effort to communicate the school's statement of faith, philosophy, vision, mission, core values, and expected student outcomes to its community and stakeholders. In an effort to ensure that these components have an integral and effective part in the uniqueness and functionality of the school, they have used various tools for this communication. These documents are widely distributed through the policy manual, handbooks, parent nights, and website, and have become a driving force in the culture of the school. SCS's leadership has created the foundational and philosophical documents to have a clear impact on the way the school is run.

DATA/DOCUMENTATION: List the required documentation and supporting evidence provided electronically (see *Standards Manual* for list.)

The following samples are available for review electronically:

a. Vision and mission statements

b. Philosophy document packet

c. Statement of faith

d. Informational documents for parents and students interested in the school

e. Informational document packet for potential school donors

f. Sample letters from alumni discussing the school's impact upon their personal faith

g. Newsletters and monthly parent news

h. Expected student outcomes listed by grade and subject

i. Parent and student handbooks

j. Policies for board review of the mission

k. School history and development monograph

STRENGTHS: State one to three strengths that exemplify how your school is meeting this Standard.

The SCS board and executive leadership believe that it had not been reviewing the foundational documents often enough in the past, prior to the last accreditation cycle. Throughout the past five years, all the foundational documents have been systematically reviewed and revised as needed. There is now a regular schedule for review of all documents for which the board and executive leadership are responsible. During the past five years, this cycle has been adhered to and the documents have been revised to truly represent the school. Some significant decisions have been made as a result of this review.

AREAS FOR CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: State one to three areas for continuous school improvement that will assist your school in ongoing growth.

For Indicator 1.5, it is clear that the school needs to continue to support teachers who may have students who are more diverse than they were trained to teach. Some have embraced the change faster than others. Some need additional training.

Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) Samples

Sample 1

Area of Improvement #1: Create a process and schedule for board training.				
Goal: To ensure board familiarity with the school's key philosophical principles over time.				
Actions	**Who is Responsible?**	**Resources Needed**	**Action Due Date**	**Evidence of Progress**
1. Gather samples of approaches used by other, similar, accredited schools	Board Chairman	List of key accredited schools from ACSI	Six (6) months	A sample questionnaire generated and sent out
2. Review the approaches used by others and generate an applicable approach for use at CCCS	Board members and school CEO	Time scheduled in the board schedule	Six (6) months	A recommendation by the board for a model (or the development of a model)
3. Implement the pilot approach and continue this schedule for several cycles of new board members	Board Chairman	Special scheduled board training sessions Training resources for board members	Three (3) years	Personal discussion with board members One (1) year after coming on the board to assess familiarity with philosophical documents
4. Revise the process and solidify the protocol in the board policies	School CEO	Dedicated day for revision of the process Secretarial time for updating the process and inclusion in the board policy manual	One (1) year	Updated board manual that reflects training component and schedule.
5. Implement the new process	Board Chairman School CEO Board members	New policy document Training protocol	Three (3) months	Training time during summer board retreat
6. Poll the board members on the training process—awareness of school mission and philosophy	Board Chairman	Evaluation rubric	One (1) month	Completion of training evaluation Review of the training time during the board retreat
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of the training	Board Chairman School CEO	Completed evaluations	One (1) month	Training program adjusted to reflect data gathered from the board evaluations
Communication to Constituents: In board handbook, add section on board training and the requirements for attendance.				
Expected Schoolwide Learning Outcome Result(s) Addressed: This improvement goal does not specifically address any student learning outcome.				

Sample 2

School Improvement Goal #2: Creation of a student mentoring program that connects high school students with key faculty in a relationally based, supportive environment while providing strong biblical accountability and life-choices goals.

Outcome: A program that connects all students with a mentor teacher

Student Benefit: Connection with a staff adult who knows their needs and is available for input, encouragement, and guidance.

Project duration: Four (4) years | **Begin Date:** June 2018 | **Completion Date:** June 2022

Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Strategy	Resources Needed	Staff Development	Completion Evidence
Year one	Superintendent Mentoring committee	Poll the students for identified needs and issues facing HS students today. Discuss approaches to mentoring with developmental professionals	Survey for students Funding for survey assessment	None	Data on student issues Input from the professional community
Year two	Mentoring committee	Research programs and/or schools with mentoring programs in place. Create a proposal for a mentoring program.	Travel funds for visiting programs and/or schools Flex time for mentoring team meeting	None	Synthesized report on current program application Draft proposal
Year three	Admin	Review the proposal by the board and administrative team.			Edited version of proposal
	Mentoring committee	Recommend implementation of the proposed program.	Final copy of proposal In-service day for presentation	Orientation on mentoring programs and goals	
Year four	Admin and mentoring committee	Finalize the mentoring program details for implementation in the fall.	Stipend for summer work		Finalized program guide
	Mentoring committee	Generate a student mentoring handbook. Generate a mentor's handbook. Generate a mentoring schedule.	Stipend for summer work		Handbooks

Communication to Constituents:
Introduce families in summer newsletter; back-to-school night; teachers set-up during faculty in-service; monitor through faculty meetings.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Outcome Result(s) Addressed:
Students will understand they are valued and loved by a Christ-centered community who is concerned for their over-all well being.