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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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FOREWORD AND RECOGNITION

■ Accreditation by a well-recognized agency is a seal of quality on an educational organization. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) promotes the value and worthiness of accreditation and encourages each school and early education program to continuously pursue excellence. We believe that this pursuit matches the biblical directive of approving “things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:10, KJV). The “accredited” seal denotes a school that has met institutional standards of quality and that verifies a commitment to strategic improvement and ongoing accountability.

The process of accreditation involves three significant elements:

- 1. Intensive, institution-wide self-appraisal, analysis, and improvement planning*
- 2. External consultation, review, validation, and insights from a visiting peer group*
- 3. Ongoing accountability for improvement through annual reporting and renewal*

ACSI’s internationally recognized accreditation program is designed to assist schools in obtaining widely recognized accredited status. The following are some of the benefits of being an ACSI accredited educational institution:

- Accredited membership status in ACSI and a listing as such in the online directory
- Approval by the U.S. Department of Education for the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), I-20 and I-17 forms
- Various U.S. state and several national recognitions for credits/athletics
- Endorsement to administer College Board/ACT exams on the school site
- Early education accreditation process approved in various states
- Eligibility for joint accreditation status with the following:
 - AdvancED (North Central Association, Southern Association, and Northwest Association accrediting organizations)
 - New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 - Middle States Association (Elementary and/or Secondary)
 - Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Recognition of early education accreditation status in several states, allowing the program to receive higher reimbursement rates for subsidized children. (E-mail early_education@acsi.org to receive information on the state approval process.)

ACSI accreditation is a highly effective way for a Christian school to evaluate itself in light of its unique educational mission. An authentic Christian school may be thought of as involving the four interwoven educational strands of 1) academic ideas and thinking, 2) skills for life and living, 3) biblical worldview grounding, and 4) personal character, values, and spiritual formation. The self-study process guides a school to evaluate and reflect on all that it does in light of this distinctive four-pronged mission.

The *REACH* process is thought provoking in its approach, stimulating in its methods, and efficient in its procedures. Its core goal is to provoke a reflective and interactive dialogue among the stakeholders of a school. The school will be positioned to refine its strategic plan for student learning and organizational effectiveness, on the basis of its reflection on each of the eight standards and the insights of the visiting team.

Accreditation is what all good educational organizations seek in order to validate their quality and to verify that they are striving for excellence. Since ACSI schools bear the name of Christ, which is excellent (Psalm 8:1, KJV), they should reflect His name in the way they provide high-quality education.



Erin Wilcox, EdD
Executive Director, ACSI Commission on Accreditation

ACSI AFFILIATION WITH ABHE AND UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOGNITION

ACSI and the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) have formed a partnership that provides tacit recognition of ACSI EE–12 accreditation by the United States Department of Education. Each ACSI accredited school will, at no cost, be listed on the ABHE website as an affiliate member of ABHE. This agreement is based on our matching missions and the desire for ACSI to link with a Christian accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE). There are a number of very positive benefits to this recognition. Our agreement states the following: The Association for Biblical Higher Education and the Association of Christian Schools International have resolved to collaborate in assuring, advancing, and advocating for distinctively biblical and excellent Christian education at the preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Christian Scriptures.

There are only two entities that provide recognition of valid accreditation in the United States, and the ABHE Commission on Accreditation is recognized by both of them. ABHE, which earned and has maintained such USDE accrediting agency recognition since 1952, is listed by the United States Department of Education (USDE) as a recognized institutional Title IV “gatekeeper” accrediting agency. ABHE is also listed as a recognized faith-related agency by the important Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Under this agreement with ABHE, the same level of tacit recognition that is afforded to elementary and secondary schools accredited by organizations such as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Middle States Association (MSA), or AdvancED is now afforded to ACSI accredited EE–12 schools. All aspects of the EE–12 accreditation process will continue to be led and managed by ACSI.

INTRODUCTION

■ The *REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation for EE–12 North American and International Schools* is designed for Christian schools in the United States and around the world that are preparing students for direct transition to English language tertiary programs such as those in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere. The eight standards in this document are broad declarations of quality performance, procedures, and practices that should exist in all Christian schools and early education programs. (**Note: throughout this manual the word *school(s)* is intended to reflect early education, elementary, middle, and secondary programs.**)

There are three manuals that are part of the accreditation process:

1. [Standards Manual for Accreditation](#)
2. [Rubrics Manual](#)
3. [Early Education Evidence Guide](#)

The *Standards Manual for Accreditation* and the *Rubrics Manual* are applicable to all EE–12 schools and EE stand-alone programs seeking accreditation with ACSI. The *Early Education Evidence Guide* is required in addition for any school with an early education program, attached or stand-alone, that is included in the accreditation process.

The *Standards Manual for Accreditation* includes an overview of the process and extensive appendixes of related materials for schools beginning the initial or renewal accreditation. It lists each of the eight standards and the rationale and justification for the standard as well as presenting the indicators that relate to the standard. The *Rubrics Manual* unpacks each standard with a number of indicators and with a rubric for the school to use in rating itself. These ratings assist the school in determining to what extent it is meeting the standard. The indicators and rubrics also serve the purpose of having the school’s stakeholders engage in a healthy and deep dialogue about quality. The *Early Education Evidence Guide (EEEG)* is for attached or stand-alone preschools, and it notes the additional indicators in which the “compliance” level must be met for Standards 3, 5, and 6 for these programs. The *EEEG* also notes the evidences or observations that support meeting or exceeding compliance.

The goal for a school is to reach the “compliance” level for every indicator. A number of indicators are identified as critical. These are indicators that the

school must meet or exceed the “compliance” level for an initial or renewal accreditation visit to take place. These are reviewed with the school at the time of granting candidacy and on the annual report submitted by schools continuing accreditation. Visiting teams do not come to a school until these compliance requirements are met. If a school finds a particular critical indicator that is not possible for it to meet, the school may follow the process to request an exception from ACSI. (See appendix L.)

The standards, standard justification statements, indicators, rubrics, and early education evidence are meant to be viewed as an entire entity and not as discrete elements to be addressed in isolation. The school’s self-study report, including the school improvement plan, should reflect this holistic approach to its self-evaluation. The report must reflect clear alignment among the standards reports, its summary findings, and its plan for school improvement. The school improvement plan should identify both curricular achievement goals as well as organizational improvements that will enhance the educational experience of students. The various standards subcommittees should represent the school’s stakeholders and provide a forum for lively and engaged conversation about the present status of the school and about its preferred future in both the short- and long-term.

Schools in the accreditation process will routinely find areas of needed improvement in some and possibly all standard areas. Authentic dialogue and transparent self-assessment are central to getting the most value out of the self-study process.

Accreditation should be viewed as integral to an ongoing process of institutional assessment, improvement, and development. It is voluntary, invigorating, demanding, and worthwhile. It is for a school that is determined to demonstrate that it has achieved a recognized standard of quality, and it also recognizes opportunities for continuous school improvement.

STANDARDS NOTE: All eight standards apply to each level (EE-12). Some indicators may not apply to all levels.

ACCREDITATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

■ Before applying for accreditation, the school should carefully review the standards and process. Meeting standards and completing the self-study require a strong commitment by the governing body, faculty, and staff.

The following steps outline the application process:

APPLICATION

The accreditation application may be obtained from your ACSI regional office or from the ACSI website. The completed application and applicable attachments should be returned to the regional office, along with the application fee, a copy of the governing body minutes indicating approval for the school to pursue accreditation with ACSI, and a preliminary profile.

The preliminary profile includes a brief paragraph narrative of no more than 300 words for each required element that presents a snapshot on each of the following topics:

1. Founding and purpose of the school
2. Ownership, legal standing, organizational and governance structure
3. Description of the school community/stakeholders
4. Significant trends in the past three years (e.g., enrollment, finances, facilities)
5. Type of instructional program (e.g., traditional, classical, online, bilingual, IGCSE)
6. Staff numbers and hiring qualifications
7. School funding sources
8. Vision for the future (three to five years)

International schools apply through the ACSI Global office in Colorado Springs.

Schools that wish to obtain joint accreditation with ACSI and another recognized agency should notify the ACSI regional office or ACSI Global office upon application. ACSI should be identified as the lead agency, and in such cases ACSI will inform the school about its separate application to the other accrediting agency. 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 that the school sends to the ACSI regional office in its area.

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

CANDIDATE STATUS VISIT

Once the accreditation application has been received by the regional or Global office, the school will be contacted to establish a date for a candidate status visit. The purpose of this brief visit is to determine whether the school can meet the standards, complete the self-study, and host the visiting team within a three-year period. It is also an appropriate time to discuss specific questions related to the accreditation process and/or to further familiarize parent groups, governing body members, or faculty with the meaning and the process of accreditation.

Once candidate status has been granted, the school will receive official notification from the ACSI regional office. A consultant will be assigned to work with the school.

The purpose of the candidacy visit is threefold:

1. To gain sufficient knowledge of the school and assess its suitability and readiness for entry into the ACSI accreditation process
2. To assist the school leadership in organizing the self-study process and set a tentative timeline for the candidacy period through the team visit
3. To orient, answer questions, and consult with the leadership, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders about the accreditation standards and their role in the various aspects of the process

In order to accomplish the first objective, the consultant will determine the extent to which the following are in place:

- a. The school has a clearly formulated Christian educational philosophy and a set of objectives, both of which are set forth in a written statement that takes into account the distinctive location, nature, and goals of the school.
- b. There is evidence that the school will be able to meet each of the accreditation standards by the time of the visit.

If the school is renewing, all required recommendations or improvements must be made before the team visit since the school cannot be accredited until these are corrected.

- c. The governing body is committed to the accreditation and school improvement process, including their participation in the self-study.
- d. Staff (executive leadership, instructional, and support) are sufficient in number, qualified, and appropriately assigned, such that they provide for effective operation of the school.
- e. Instructional elements and pedagogical practices, including overall curricular content and design and organizational arrangement, support an educational culture that meets the needs of the students, and they are consistent with the mission and schoolwide expected student outcomes of the school.
- f. Day-to-day organizational policies and procedures are clearly established and communicated.
- g. The school ensures that the services it provides—transportation, food, residence, and/or others—meet acceptable standards of health, safety, and comfort, fulfilling all applicable legal requirements.
- h. Instructional materials and equipment are appropriate, and the school has a sufficient quantity to fulfill the basic needs of the instructional program.
- i. Grounds, buildings, technical installations, basic furnishings, and supporting equipment are adequate for effective support of the total school program.
- j. Financial resources, including budgeting and fiscal management, are capable of sustaining a sound educational program that is consistent with the stated philosophy and objectives of the school.
- k. The school complies with all national, state, provincial, and local legal guidelines.

In order to achieve the second objective of the candidate status visit, the consultant will wish to do the following:

- a. Review the entire self-study process with the executive leadership team of the school, faculty, governing body members, and others as appropriate.
- b. Review the ACSI self-study instrument and all standard practices with the leadership of the school to ensure that everyone concerned is fully cognizant of what is expected.
- c. Establish a proposed schedule of dates for accomplishing the steps in the process, including dates for the evaluation by the visiting team.

- d. Agree on the general composition of the visiting team.
- e. Inform the school of any areas of operation and/or facilities that, in the opinion of the consultant, are seriously deficient and suggest improvements that might be made before the visit of the team.

The school can help the consultant and save time by providing the consultant with as much documentation as possible to assist with his or her inquiry in advance of arrival or at least upon arrival.

The candidacy visit, if well organized, should normally take no more than one or two full days at the school. The consultant will want to look over the entire school plant but will not have time to sit in individual classes. He or she will need to meet at some length with the executive leadership of the school and/or the early education director.

CONSULTANT (See Appendix J)

The consultant assigned to the school has been trained in the many components of the ACSI accreditation program. The consultant serves as a resource person throughout the entire self-study process. All the expenses incurred by the consultant are paid by the school. ACSI team members are reimbursed for their expenses but are not paid a stipend for their service. For international schools, the consultant is required to make an on-site visit six to nine months before the arrival of the visiting team to ensure the school's readiness for the visit.

SELF-STUDY (See Appendix G)

The school is required to complete a self-study. It must organize the school staff and other stakeholders into standard study groups to complete the process. Each of the eight standards is carefully reviewed using the indicators and rubrics to guide the preparation of an accurate, complete, well-written report. It must rate itself on each of the indicators, write a concluding narrative in regard to the standard, and compile a list of evidence which the school used to rate the indicator.

In addition to the accreditation and rubric manuals, the early education programs will use the EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators for standards 3, 5, and 6. This guide will assist programs in determining if they are reaching or exceeding the compliance level in regard to each indicator. It will also note particular strengths and areas where needed improvements are indicated.

Completion of a quality self-study normally takes 18 to 24 months for a school that is going through its initial accreditation. The self-study is a high-value aspect of the accreditation process, and it must be approached with deliberation and high levels of involvement to attain the quality report that is needed. (See appendixes C, D, and E.)

TEAM VISIT

Upon completion of the self-study, a team of peer Christian school teachers and administrators is scheduled to visit the school. The number of members on the team depends on the size of the school, the number of grades and ages served, and the number of campuses involved. The length of the visit is at least two and a half days; it can be up to four days. The school is responsible for all the travel and hosting expenses of the visiting team members.

The primary purpose of the team's visit is to verify the integrity of the self-study and observe that the standards are being met. In other words, does the self-study accurately reflect the programs and overall ministry of the school? The team's final report will address every section of the self-study. The team members will prepare a list of commendations and recommendations for each section of the self-study. Other report formats may be necessary in the case of joint accreditation and/or as directed by state approval agreements for early education programs.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE TEAM VISIT

The visiting team will conduct scheduled visits and interviews as well as randomly talk to students, parents, faculty, board members, and support staff. The purpose of these visits is to get a sense of the school and how it is functioning. Scheduled interviews will take place with student leaders, the board, and the leadership of the parent organization. The various groups that compiled the sections of the self-study will have meetings with visiting team members assigned to each of the standards. Classroom observations take place to overview the academic rigor, classroom management, student engagement, teacher-student relationships, and pedagogy in the school. The tone of the interviews and classroom visits is collegial and not inspective.

The visiting team will write a report that follows an established template. There is a narrative section for each standard that summarizes the "what is" assessment of the school by the visiting team. The

team will identify commendable practices and make recommendations to the school for improvements. In the concluding section of the report, the visiting team will identify significant areas that are commendable and also major recommendations that the school must address.

Members of the visiting team will keep the following points clearly in mind: In view of the public responsibility assumed by ACSI in undertaking the accreditation of schools, an important trust has been placed in the visiting team to conduct and report its investigations thoroughly. Thus, ACSI will ensure that every team member does the following:

1. Becomes familiar with the self-study report, in particular those parts for which he or she has been assigned specific responsibility, in order to be able to use the observation time efficiently.
2. Contributes to a report that will be sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to be both a reliable basis for the decision of the accreditation commission and a useful working document for the future development of the school.
3. Holds all information of the school in confidence.

Though the school's standards must warrant ACSI approval if accreditation is to be granted, team members will be aware that the school is being evaluated first and foremost in terms of its own philosophy and objectives. It must also be clearly understood that when classrooms are being observed, teams should look for compliance with health and safety standards and age-appropriate instructional strategies.

The team members, when in private with one another and when in contact with representatives of the school, will have an open-minded and constructive attitude and will endeavor to be of service with an emphasis on assisting the school rather than sitting in judgment on it.

The visiting team may conclude its visit with a faculty meeting at which it reviews major commendations and recommendations. A recommendation may be shared with the school about whether the school will be accredited; however, no information about the school and the visit should be released or communicated to any outside parties by the visiting team.

ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

At the conclusion of the team visit, the team's report will be forwarded to the appropriate ACSI USA or ACSI Global office. The team's report will be reviewed at the appropriate meeting of the ACSI regional accreditation commission, and action will be taken regarding the school's status and term of accreditation. A final report will be mailed to the school after the decision on accreditation has been made.

MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION: A COMMITMENT TO A SYSTEMATIC PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

Improvement plans: The continuous school improvement plan (CSIP) that the school has developed for its self-study before the team visit lists prioritized improvements that school leaders feel are necessary for the school to grow. After the team visit, the major recommendations from the team must be incorporated into the school's CSIP.

When the school submits its first annual report to its regional office, it should include procedures for addressing the major recommendations from the visiting team report and any substantive changes within the school.

Annual reports: Annual reports should be sent to the appropriate ACSI USA or ACSI Global office. The annual report seeks information on the demographics of the school each year, financial status (reviews, practices, or audits, when applicable), and requires the school to identify how it has progressed on its major recommendations. 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.

Midterm visit and interim report: For international schools, a midterm accreditation visit is usually made to the accredited school two or three years after the initial granting of accreditation status. In the United States, a midterm visit may or may not be required, depending on the term granted by the regional commission. In joint accreditation, the timing of the visit is coordinated with the other accrediting agency. The school interim/midterm report gives an account of the school's progress regarding all recommendations of the visiting team. 🌱

STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY AND FOUNDATIONS

■ The school has developed written statements of philosophy, mission, vision, core values, and 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.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

Biblical principles support, influence, and drive all aspects of the school's philosophy and foundations, which provide perspective for the past, give context to the present, and establish direction for the future of the school and its educational programs. The Christian school looks to the Bible as the primary source for all its foundational statements of education. Because the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, the philosophy, mission, vision, and core values derived from it will be God-honoring. Christian schools exist because their philosophy is unique in the educational world. Christian school philosophy is based on belief in Jesus Christ, who said in John 14:6, "I am ... the truth," and in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (NIV).

In determining its educational philosophy and guiding statements, every school must ask these questions:

1. Why does our school exist?
2. What are the biblical implications for educational priorities and practices?
3. What are the distinctives that set us apart?
4. What are the goals of our school?
5. How will these goals be achieved?
6. What are the characteristics of a student completing the school's educational program? (What are our schoolwide expected student outcomes?)

Philosophy and guiding statements must be written clearly and concisely if they are to give the school direction and permeate every part of its life. The faculty, staff, governing body, parents, and other stakeholders should be involved in formulating, reviewing, and revising these documents. These statements should also be inculcated into the key elements of the school annually.

Of equal importance is the value this philosophical development process has in melding the school together as an educational institution. The task of preparing, communicating, and regularly reviewing the philosophy statement is foundational to the evaluation necessary for accreditation and is central to the healthy life of the school. The more the executive leadership, staff, and governing body come to know and express the guiding statements of the school, the greater the impact will be on the families and the community.

If the school is part of a larger entity, responses must include how the philosophy and guiding statements are specifically applicable to the school, including the early education program.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical.

- 1.1 The statement of faith and the philosophy, mission, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcome statements of the school are established and are reviewed regularly and systematically in a collaborative manner. (C)**
- 1.2 The school communicates its philosophy, mission, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcome statements to its constituents and community. (C)
- 1.3 The foundational documents are consistently applied as integrative, coordinating, and examining devices 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, mission, and vision of the school. (C)

- 1.5 From a distinctively Christian perspective, all staff demonstrate a commitment to the development of the whole child—spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially (Luke 2:52).
(C)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.

Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.


Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence: The required documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Philosophy, vision, mission statements, and core values
- Statement of faith
- School profile
- Schoolwide expected student outcomes
- Samples of communications with parents, students, and constituents
- Wide distribution of the mission, vision, philosophy, and expected student outcome statements throughout the school community
- Linkage established in the curriculum guides/plans and the teacher lesson plans to the stated mission, vision, philosophy, and expected student outcome statements

Supporting Evidence

- Involvement by parents, staff, students, and community members in the formation and/or processing of the school's vision, philosophy, and goals

- Indication by parents, staff, students, and community members that they are familiar with the school's mission, vision, philosophy, and goals
- Leadership actions that develop commitment to the mission and the vision
- Constituent understanding of how the allocation of resources within the school reflects the stated vision, philosophy, and goals
- Perceptions among the constituents regarding the extent to which the articulated vision, purpose, and goals characterize the operation of the school
- Surveys/evaluation instruments and results
- Annual and long-range goals
- Handbooks, policy manuals
- Newsletters, brochures, and other publications containing information about the vision and purpose
- Other 

STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

■ The school has Christ-centered governance and executive leadership that promotes effectiveness of the school and growth of the student through an established structure that contributes to an operationally and financially sound Christian educational institution.

The executive leadership and governing body work in partnership to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the institution through the establishment of written policies and procedures. The head of school is responsible for the supervision of all operations of the school and implementation of board policies.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

Governance

Schools vary widely according to location, culture, purpose, and sponsorship; every school has specific nuances. Together, the variables create the distinctive nature of the school. Just as each school is unique, each is also similar in the areas of need and stakeholder expectations. Most important, the governing body provides vibrant spiritual leadership when addressing their responsibilities.

The governing body of a school is a body of informed decision makers who commit to worthy, ongoing pursuits. Oversight includes accountability, evaluation, advocacy, facilitation of the collaborative creation of guiding statements, and policy development.

Educational institutions receive enthusiastic support when they secure the confidence of the constituency in operational matters. Sound business practices are foundational to the growth, development, and ongoing testimony of Christian schools. Every reasonable step should be taken to establish and maintain a strong relationship of financial trust between the governing body and executive leadership, faculty, and the school community. As a result, an atmosphere of mutual respect and purpose exists between all parties on behalf of the students and their learning.

The governing body empowers the head of school to make day-to-day decisions concerning the implementation of the policies and programs being offered by the school. These policies reflect the mission, vision, core values, and philosophy of the education program. The role of the governing body is not to manage the day-to-day operation of the school

but to empower the head of school by establishing appropriate policies to accomplish the mission of the school. Generally, the head of school is the sole employee of the board, and staff members report to the head of school. Some church-sponsored schools have different reporting structures, and the head of school could report to a pastor, executive pastor, or church board in addition to a school board. In these situations, it is critically important that roles and reporting relationships are clearly established and communicated.

Executive Leadership

Educational leaders must have a clear testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. They must be spiritually qualified and be committed to the doctrine, philosophy, goals, vision, and mission of the school. Educational leaders are held to a high biblical standard of accountability for their actions and demeanor (James 3:1, Titus 1:7–9, and 1 Timothy 3:1–13). Schools that are seeking to influence the spiritual growth of students and families must be led by individuals who have strong spiritual as well as professional qualifications. The character and work ethic of the leadership are tied to a higher purpose: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23).

The personal and professional qualifications of the head of school have a significant influence on the entire school. The leadership skills of the head of school enhance the effectiveness of the entire educational faculty and staff. As the leader of the school, the head of school is responsible for the development of the curricula, the spiritual formation of the students, and the foundational principles for the programs.

Faculty and staff members are invited to participate in leadership through ideas, solutions, and perspectives they bring to the process. Collaboration is invited and valued, and the head of school nurtures this culture in the school.

NOTE: Head of school always refers to the chief administrator. Titles for that role vary significantly from school to school (for example, principal, administrator, headmaster, head of school, director, president, superintendent).

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical. Indicators which are marked with an asterisk (*) **must** be met at the “compliance” level or higher for a team visit to occur.

- 2.1 A governing body has been established, and its primary responsibilities include: developing general school governance policy; hiring the head of school; providing direction and strategic planning; ensuring the financial stability, effectiveness, and consistency between all campuses of the institution; defining the role of the governing body; defining the role of the head of school, and conducting systematic board self-evaluation and training. (C)
- 2.2 **The governance and executive leadership team of the school reflects a clear Christ-centered governance and executive leadership model. A policy is in place that requires a testimony and evidence of faith in Jesus Christ from all board members and executive leadership.** (C)
- 2.3 The governing body supports the head of school’s prerogatives and responsibilities, and it provides for an appropriate annual evaluation of the head of school. (C)
- 2.4 Constituents and stakeholders are given opportunities to provide feedback to leadership regarding decisions of the school, a practice that promotes a culture of participation and transparency. (C)
- 2.5 **Established written policies and procedures promote effective operations in admissions, governance, finance, and other operational aspects. Appropriate legal documents and clearly articulated articles of incorporation, governing body policies, and bylaws are established and are available for review.** (C)
- 2.6 **Established written policies are in place to see that the educational and developmental needs**

of each admitted student are being met on the basis of biblical principles, professional ethics, and high standards. Staff members are sensitive to the culture, gender, language, and special needs of students and their families. (C)

- 2.7 **Financial resources are available to fulfill the mission and programs of the school, and financial operations and decisions are conducted with integrity and in accordance with biblical principles. Income received from tuition is appropriately used for education-related expenses within the school.** (C)
- 2.8 The budget is constructed carefully—using input from program heads—and is managed properly in accordance with the stated goals of the school. The budget reflects an accurate assessment of the cost of educating a student, including instructional supplies and informational technology. Stated student outcomes are appropriately financed. (C)
- 2.9 **A review of the school’s finances is conducted by an external CPA, who has no vested interest in the school, at the time of initial accreditation and renewal. The annual statement of financial practices is submitted with the annual accreditation report. (See *Options for Meeting Indicator 2.9* for details.)** (C)
- 2.10 Just compensation packages are documented for all employees and are commensurate with the training and services rendered. (C)
- 2.11***The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, and it is in good standing with all regulatory agencies.** (C)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.

Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence:


The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Governing body policy manual and bylaws
- Operational policy and procedures manual
- Organizational chart (offices, roles, terms, etc.)
- Budget development plan and budget documents
- Admissions policies and procedures
- Governing body and leadership job descriptions (including testimony and evidence of faith)
- Financial audits or reviews
- Governing body and leadership evaluation instruments
- Long and short-range goals/plans
- Certificates of compliance with local, state, federal, and provincial laws, if applicable
- Salary and benefits/compensations documentation
- Provide documentation that shows a clear understanding of the role of the board and the administration
- Provide documentation of understanding among the constituency of the decision-making procedures of the school and evidence of securing appropriate stakeholder input in the process
- Evidence of liability insurance
- Hiring procedures

Supporting Evidence

- Information (agendas/minutes) on constituency meetings offered by the school
- Brochures and other publications on admissions
- Tuition and fee rates
- Program and/or project descriptions
- Governing body minutes
- Understanding among constituency of the specific and general policies and procedures established within the school
- An evaluation of instructional and organizational effectiveness

- Meaningful leadership roles assigned throughout the school community
- Accomplishments of subordinate leaders within the school community
- Leadership opportunities provided by parent and community groups to school operations
- Avenues for two-way communication with constituency 

STANDARD 3: HOME AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND STUDENT SERVICES

■ The school exists and functions as an institution of reliability and authority by exhibiting a pattern of respect, trust, accountability, and dignity to its constituents, both internally and externally. Effective communication and relationships are fostered with constituents, as well as among constituents. A wide range of strategies are used to incorporate involvement by the parents and the community. It is expected that the school meets the educational and developmental needs of the students it enrolls. Services at the appropriate levels include guidance (both academic and personal) and student activities (curricular and cocurricular). Appropriate resources and planning occur to ensure that the mission, vision, and philosophy are being carried out to meet the expected student outcomes.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

Clear statements and communication of philosophy and mission will attract mission-appropriate families and result in students being enrolled in the school. Each school should evaluate the nature and quality of its relationships with the families and the like-minded churches it serves in the local community.

Since parents are a child's primary teachers, schools must respect the critical role parents play in supporting the growth and development of their child. Scripture clearly establishes the parental mandate to teach spiritual truths throughout all aspects of daily life (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). The education offered in a Christian school must be Christ-centered. Effective partnerships with parents are a vital part of quality education. A rapport is built between staff and parents that supports communication between the home and the education program.

Before the child's attendance at school, parents/guardians are oriented to the philosophy, curriculum, guidance policies, assessment practices, and operating procedures in an interactive process that provides staff of the school with information about the child and the family. The staff actively initiates relationships with families cultivating communication and providing multiple avenues for ongoing parent involvement and feedback.

Guidance includes assessing and assisting students in their initial adjustment to the school,

and then it continues with counseling as needed during subsequent years. Sound counsel requires an understanding of the student and includes assessments of ability and achievement. In secondary school, these responsibilities take on added significance as students begin to seek vocational direction and assess their academic preparation and the development of their gifts and personalities.

Student activities are another component of education. A Christian school must be certain that the activities are carried out in a way that furthers the desired schoolwide expected student outcomes in the life of the student. It is possible for schools to be strongly Christian in the classroom but to take on secular norms in their cocurricular activities. A philosophical foundation of biblical integration must also be readily apparent in the activities outside the classroom. Activities of all kinds open unique opportunities for influencing students. In many cases, the public display and testimony of a school's Christian philosophy is most evident in the arena of activities.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical. Indicators which are marked with an asterisk (*) **must** be met at the “compliance” level or higher for a team visit to occur.

- 3.1 **Enrollment is sufficient to establish the viability of the school and all divisions it offers (i.e., EE, elementary, secondary).** (C)
- 3.2 The school conducts regular demographic assessments of its constituents in order to better fulfill its stated mission: 1) educational levels, 2) ethnic diversity, 3) faith backgrounds, and 4) other pertinent family information. (See regional Accreditation Manager for guidelines.) (C)

- 3.3 The length of the school day and year, as well as the number of instructional hours and days, complies with applicable laws. (E/S)
- 3.4 Regular, established, and effective two-way communication occurs between the school and its constituents. (C)
- 3.4a The program has a plan for collaboration and communication with the families regarding the child’s developmental milestones, individual learning goals, and classroom experiences, while developing effective strategies to support learning at home. (EE)
- 3.5 The school has established biblical principles for resolving differences between the school and its constituents. These policies are written, reviewed, and communicated for effective implementation. (C)
- 3.6 The school systematically seeks input/feedback from parents, staff, and current and past students in order to adjust its instructional and operational practices. Survey data is regularly gathered and analyzed for feedback regarding program satisfaction. (See Appendix E) (C)
- 3.7* The nondiscrimination statement is published and evident in the actions, relationships, and programs of the school. (C)**

Guidance and Support Services

- 3.8 Guidance services are provided at age-appropriate levels and communicated to families. High school guidance services provide academic course selection along with college and career planning. (E/S)
- 3.9 The school has a process to identify the unique learning needs of individual students, and support is provided in order for them to meet the expected student outcomes. (C)
- 3.10 Confidential records of students are complete, organized, current, accessible only to appropriate personnel, compliant with applicable legal requirements, and kept in a safe location. (C)**
- 3.11 The school has a written plan in place for the transfer of student records to an appropriate accredited school, association, or local school district in the event of closure. (C)

Student Activities

- 3.12 Student activities are consistent with the mission

of the school, are a balanced variety, and are reflective of the needs of all students. (E/S)

Personal Care, Support, and Advocacy for Children

- 3.13 The director ensures that daily transitions and regrouping of children are minimized through organization, written policies, and staffing. (EE)
- 3.14 Each group of children has one primary teacher/caregiver to help ensure that the individual child is cared for and nurtured. (EE)
- 3.15 Staff members receive professional development on how to intentionally prepare and maintain an emotionally healthy environment (outlined in the EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators). (EE)**
- 3.16 The program utilizes a research-based developmental screening tool within three months of enrollment and has a written early intervention plan for helping children who exhibit varying developmental delays or challenges in the learning environment. Staff are trained annually in implementing the plan. (EE)
- 3.17 The program has an established plan offering a variety of engagement opportunities for families supporting their participation in the education of their child while promoting the inclusion of multicultural and linguistic diversity. (EE)
- 3.18 Families are provided with information, materials, and resources from local or state agencies or services to assist with the health, developmental, and educational needs of their children. (EE)
- 3.19 Families are provided with an annually updated handbook outlining policies and procedures of the program, and parents/guardians sign acknowledgement indicating agreement with the information. (EE)
- 3.20 The program has a marketing and recruitment plan to attract families to their distinct mission and vision for high quality care and early education. (EE)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.

Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence: The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Constituent (past and present) surveys and demographic surveys
- Schedules of parent conferences
- Student orientation programs
- List of student activities offered and qualifications of supervising staff
- Parent/student handbooks
- Any documentation used for student transition to the next grade level
- Advisory programs for students and the student referral process
- Inclusion policy for students who have special needs, if applicable
- School calendar and other publications that reflect the number of hours and days required
- Various methods in which the school communicates with constituents
- The inclusion of dialogue with constituents in the communication process and evidence that the school responds to constituent input
- Planning and implementation of inclusion plans for students who have special needs, if applicable
- Transfer of records plan

Supporting Evidence

- Perception data from constituents regarding their feeling of affiliation with the school and of being well-informed regarding school issues and events
- The use of focus groups to process issues
- Individuals and groups representative of the community that participate in the work of the school
- A wide variety of forums in which expectations for students and for school improvement are presented

- Parent and student knowledge of expectations regarding student behavior and learning and of school improvement initiatives
- Data regarding student's feeling of acceptance within the school and readiness for success at the next level
- Surveys
- Agendas/minutes of constituent meetings, trainings, or presentations
- Student progress reports
- Reports to the community about the school and its students
- Course selection and/or student planning guides
- Communication plans (such as school and/or teacher websites, newsletters, letters, e-mails, automated phone messages)
- Access to online reporting of student achievement results (grades, homework, etc.)
- Career planning programs 🌟

STANDARD 4: PERSONNEL

■ The school hires personnel who have made a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and endorse the school’s statement of faith. They are committed to the written philosophy, mission, vision, and core values of the school. Faculty and staff engage in ongoing professional development to improve instructional practices leading to continual growth in student learning and development of the instructional program. The executive leadership, instructional, and support staff are sufficient in number to provide for the effective delivery of quality education and are appropriately credentialed, degreed, trained, and qualified for their assigned duties.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

The heart of the Christian school is the people who serve God on the instructional, noninstructional, and administrative staff. Every staff member is vital to the ministry to students. Because students learn so much through what they observe, the character, attitudes, and words of Christian teachers have great influence on the lives of students in their care. Scripture affirms that students become like their teachers (Luke 6:40). The faculty and the other staff establish the professional and spiritual quality of the school.

One of the most essential ways Christian educators follow Christ’s example in their instructional practices is by building relationships with students and tailoring their responses to individual needs (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). Another way is by dedication to growth in professional knowledge and instructional skill (1 Timothy 4:15–16). Teachers’ professional and spiritual growth strengthens their impact on children’s spiritual and intellectual development.

The educational qualifications of the faculty and staff and the training they have received in the field play a significant role in the quality of schools. Degreed and trained educators are also better equipped in developing age-appropriate goals and activities for children. Student/teacher ratios, class size, and staff turnover can also make an impact on the learning environment and the function of a school. Every effort should be made to cultivate quality faculty for long-term service.

Certification of administrators and faculty is an important component in the accreditation of schools. The purpose of the ACSI certification program is to

provide qualified Christian school educators with professional credentials.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical. Indicators which are marked with an asterisk (*) **must** be met at the “compliance” level or higher for a team visit to occur.

- 4.1 Each staff member has a clear testimony of faith in Christ, has signed the school’s statement of faith, and endorses the school’s code of ethics/lifestyle statement. (See Guidelines for Outside Contracted Teachers or Instructors.) (C)**
- 4.2 The executive leadership of the school ensures staff members know and understand the ethical considerations of their respective positions. Examples include: appropriate student/teacher relationships, confidentiality with student information, and use of copyrighted material. (C)**
- 4.3* All personnel, including volunteers and substitute teachers, have the appropriate screening and background checks on file, and they are supervised by qualified staff. Orientation for new staff members is thorough and is conducted before any new staff have contact with the students. (See the *EE Annual Staff Training Guidelines*.) (C)**
- 4.4 K–12 head of school and all K–12 principal qualifications are demonstrated in one of the following ways:**
 - 1. The K–12 head of school and all K–12 principals hold ACSI administrative certification OR current state, national, or provincial administrative certification* plus Christian philosophy and Bible requirements (Other administrators, such as academic deans, directors of curriculum and**

instruction, assistant principals, etc. may be included with the teacher and professional staff certification required in Indicator 4.6.) Schools may use a combination of ACSI certification and state, national, or provincial certification, as demonstrated on the Certification Spreadsheet, to meet the indicator.

OR

2. The school has an approved School-Based Professional Development (SPD) plan, sufficiently documenting the ongoing professional development of the administration within that plan, with annual reporting to ACSI. See www.acsi.org/school_based_pd for more information. An approved SPD plan would enable the school to fulfill indicator 4.4 without submitting a Certification Spreadsheet. (E/S)

4.4a The director of the early education program has professional training as evidenced by having obtained, at minimum, one of the following:

1. a bachelor's degree (BA/BS) in early childhood education/child development or related field from an accredited institution;
2. a bachelor's degree (BA/BS) in a nonrelated field from an accredited institution and a CDA;
3. a bachelor's degree (BA/BS) in a nonrelated field from an accredited institution AND nine credit hours of college coursework in early childhood education/child development or related field;
4. a national or state level Director's Credential; or
5. a professional growth plan developed and monitored annually by the employee and their immediate supervisor which includes goal setting, training/coursework, and mentorship, and is approved by ACSI Early Education staff. (See Options for Meeting Indicator 4.4a for details.)

The director also has a working understanding of business practices as evidenced by college coursework in administration, business, leadership development, or supervision of adults, OR ongoing professional development in administration and a letter of verification of experience in the above from the board, resume, etc. (EE)

4.5 All K–12 teachers hold, at minimum, a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university or an institution recognized by ACSI. Contact the ACSI Certification Department for information regarding recognized institutions. (E/S)

4.5a Early education teachers have obtained, at minimum, one of the following:

1. an associate's degree (AA) in early childhood education/child development or related field from an accredited institution;
2. an associate's degree (AA) out-of-field AND six credit hours of early childhood/child development in college coursework;
3. an associate's degree (AA) degree out-of-field AND either a CDA or 120 documented clock hours of professional development in early childhood;
4. a CDA with documented experience working in the early education classroom; or,
5. a professional growth plan developed and monitored annually by the teacher and their direct supervisor which includes goal setting, training/coursework and mentorship, and is approved by the school's supervisor of early education. (See Options for Meeting Indicator 4.5a for details.) (EE)

4.5b Early education teacher assistants/aides have obtained one of the following:

1. CDA or equivalent;
2. completed college coursework in early childhood education;
3. state teacher assistant credential;
4. 60 documented (accrued) clock hours of professional development in early childhood within two years of employment; or,
5. a professional growth plan developed and monitored annually by the teacher assistant/TA and their direct supervisor which includes goal setting, training/coursework, and mentorship, and is approved by the school's supervisor of early education. (See Options for Meeting Indicator 4.5b for details.) (EE)

4.6 K–12 faculty qualifications (which includes teaching faculty and professional positions such as guidance counselors, athletic directors, library/media specialists, etc.) are demonstrated in one of the following ways:

1. A minimum of 80 percent of faculty and professional staff, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs), hold current ACSI certification OR current state, national, or provincial certification* plus Christian philosophy and Bible requirements. Schools may use a combination of individuals holding ACSI certification and individuals holding state, national, or provincial certification, as demonstrated on the Certification Spreadsheet, to meet the indicator. (See Guidelines for Outside

Contracted Teachers and Instructors.)

OR

2. The school has an approved School-Based Professional Development (SPD) plan, sufficiently documenting the ongoing professional development of K-12 faculty within that plan, with annual reporting to ACSI See www.acsi.org/school_based_pd for more information. An approved SPD plan would enable the school to fulfill indicator 4.6 without submitting a Certification Spreadsheet. (E/S)

4.7 Professional development for K–12 faculty, guidance personnel, informational resources staff, and other appropriate staff is ongoing and integral to the school and aligned with specific goals and instructional programs, and it includes training in biblical studies and the Christian philosophy of education. (E/S)

4.7a All EE staff who are responsible for the care and education of the children in the program participate annually in a minimum of 12 documented clock hours (state requirements for additional clock hour training must also be met) of continuing education or professional development relating to topics specific to early education. All professional development clock hours must align with one or more of the ACSI Core Competencies. Refer to the *EE Yearly Professional Development Report* and the *EE Core Competencies* document. (EE)

4.7b A minimum of four clock hours annually of biblical studies (a formal group or individual Bible study) is accepted with documentation of completion. See *EE Biblical Studies Form*. (EE)

4.7c Eighty percent of all early educators, including program leaders/directors, teachers, and teacher assistants, complete ACSI's *Principles and Practices of Christian Early Education* course. (EE)

4.8 Policies and procedures that reflect ethical employment practices regarding faculty/staff and separation from service are implemented and regularly reviewed. (C)

4.9 Executive leadership supports the implementation of effective instructional practices of faculty/staff through annual observation, evaluation, and goal setting to more effectively achieve desired student outcomes. (C)

4.9a The director ensures that a formal evaluation of new employees takes place no later than six months after the start date. (EE)

4.10 The number and professional preparation of

instructional and support staff is sufficient for the scope of the school. (C)

4.11 Teachers and administrators work collaboratively with each other to positively affect school culture, encourage student learning, and promote organizational effectiveness. (C)

4.12 The program policy provides a schedule for teaching staff that includes compensated planning time. (EE)

4.13 Breaks are reflected in the staff work schedule as per federal/state labor laws. (EE)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.


Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence: The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators.

These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Documentation of teacher credentials, including certification, licensure, highly qualified status, baccalaureate degree, etc.
- Schedules and teaching assignments
- Handbooks for faculty and staff
- Professional development and staff orientation plans, procedures, and/or opportunities including new teacher induction
- Classroom management plan/policy
- Evaluation processes, plans, and forms for new and continuing staff
- Forms such as applications, job descriptions, etc.

- Proof of screening and background checks
- Code of ethics statement (see glossary)
- Alignment of resource allocation to educational programs and to school improvement plan requirements
- Early education yearly professional development report
- A variety of ways in which staff are evaluated in their areas of responsibility
- Hourly staff schedule indicating appropriate breaks
- Technology training for faculty and staff
- Agendas/minutes of staff meetings
- Other 

Supporting Evidence

- Trends in staff recruitment and resignation
- Level of staff preparation in specific content area of assignment including the number of teachers not teaching within their field of training or certification
- Support staff that are certified or licensed
- Level of pedagogical preparation for assigned responsibilities
- Engagement of new and veteran staff in mentoring programs
- The extent to which staff are involved in personal plans of professional development
- Engagement of all school employees in appropriate professional development

STANDARD 5: INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AND RESOURCES

■ The instructional program consists of carefully developed, thoroughly documented, and well-executed curriculum elements that include educational philosophy, schoolwide expected student outcomes, a variety of effective instructional strategies, adequate resources, and appropriate assessments that are based on current research and quality practices.

The curriculum of the school is driven by well-written policies and procedures. Core instructional areas include Bible, language arts (reading, English, literature, grammar, and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies/history. It is sufficiently funded, collaboratively reviewed on a regular basis, and compiled using the school's mission, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcomes to ensure a biblical foundation for instruction. A method for assessing the effectiveness of schoolwide expected student outcomes is in place, and the results of the assessments are communicated regularly to all stakeholders.

Informational resources exist to carry out the mission of the school by supporting the instructional program with ample and appropriate print, media, and technology resources. Qualified staff provide effective services to students, staff, and parents.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

Instructional Program

Just as each school needs its own philosophy statement, goals, schoolwide expected student outcomes, and mission statement, it also needs to tailor its own curriculum framework to support the accomplishment of its educational goals.

Schoolwide expected student outcomes are what the school targets for all students to know, believe, understand, prefer, and be able to do upon completion of the school's program. These schoolwide expected student outcomes are those regularly assessed by the school to help determine the school's progress in achieving its mission and are used to inform program and instructional improvement. Trends in student achievement of these goals are communicated to the school community through such means as a school profile.

ACSI defines curriculum as "the planned instructional program to be delivered to the students." It is not

defined as the textbooks or other resource materials a school uses, though textbooks are one of many tools used by the school to deliver the planned instructional program. Nor is it simply defined as the box curriculum set that can be purchased for the early education level. Key to understanding curriculum is the "planned" element. Each school must identify the instructional model to follow, content to be utilized, and student outcomes to be realized—all resulting in the planned instructional program that is implemented on a daily basis. This planned instructional program must be well documented, teacher-friendly, and goals-driven, and it must be easily revisable as needed. It should be used as more than an occasional reference tool; faculty should use it on a regular basis, indicating that this planned instructional program functions as a living, applicable document.

Additionally, all components of the instructional program—philosophy, outcomes, documentation of instruction, textbooks, and resources—must be reviewed on a planned basis, preferably in a well-defined cycle that addresses each content area. Student achievement is also regularly analyzed, and trend data of student performance from comparable schools is utilized in evaluating the school's effectiveness. The instructional protocols and procedural standards are reviewed as well.

In Christian schools, this curricular plan must not only contain academic and developmental goals but address spiritual formation goals and integration of God's Word in a natural and unforced manner. Through the instructional program and the Christian faculty that deliver it, the students develop a Christian view of God, humanity, and the world. This view should become the foundation for students' own values, goals, and lifestyle. Care must also be given to ensure that curriculum plans and implementation appropriately reflect an acknowledgment of differences in children and show God's love for people of all races, colors, ethnicities, and genders.

Effective curriculum is also sensitive to individual developmental variation, and it provides challenging experiences that lead to growth. It is designed to meet the needs of students as they matriculate to each new level of education and eventually the responsibilities of adult life. Implementation of the curriculum is tempered by awareness of the individual variation and the characteristics of the learner, particularly early learners.

Students should be well prepared for all aspects of their lives as a result of experiencing the instructional program of the Christian school. Since all truth is God’s truth, teachable moments are utilized throughout the day to incorporate in a natural and an unforced way the truth that God is Creator and Lord of all content areas and disciplines. Integrating Christian truth into the curriculum is the distinctive of instruction. Christian moral and spiritual values are directly taught and are interwoven throughout each day’s activities in an age-appropriate manner. Students are given the opportunity to practice responding to issues and concepts in a Christlike manner.

Instructional Resources

As schools have moved increasingly into the world of digital delivery and the traditional school library has transformed into a media/resource center, the presentation and delivery of reading and research content has become available in a variety of access modes and in increasingly diverse formats.

ACSI defines informational resources as the print and digital resources that are accessible on-site or digitally to support the instructional program. This includes resources necessary for students to complete the research required for their class assignments, reading material for skill development or enjoyment, faculty resources, and reference or learning extension data. The resources available are balanced across the academic disciplines and grade levels of the school and students’ cultural heritage.

Educational technology plays an important role as a tool for learning and instruction. Preparation for all of life includes skill development in the Christ-honoring use of technology. Quality schools and programs use technology to collect, analyze, and utilize data to enhance classroom instruction and increase student learning. Christian educators understand that technology is a tool that can be properly or improperly used.

A technology plan should be in place in the school. This plan should indicate the acquisitions that will be made and how they will be implemented for effective instruction. It is important to include a plan for training of staff and the support and maintenance of equipment.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical.

Curriculum Guide/Mapping

- 5.1 **The curriculum documents developed by the school provide a well-documented biblical basis for all courses consistent with the goal of developing a biblical worldview in students. (See *Guidelines for Accepting Credits from Other Sources.*) (C)**
- 5.2 **The curriculum guides/maps drive the instructional program. The guides/maps are current and include the following components: 1) schoolwide expected student outcomes, 2) course goals and objectives, 3) biblical integration concepts, 4) school-selected standards, 5) resources, 6) time allotted for each unit, 7) instructional methods, and 8) assessments. A document, often called a *Scope and Sequence*, is available to guide the overall curriculum plan through electronic means (curriculum mapping software) or a traditional written format. The guides/maps are accessible to all faculty and inform instruction that clearly values the development of the whole child—spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. (See Appendix H regarding initial vs. renewal visit expectations.) (E/S)**
- 5.2a **The program has developed a curriculum guide/plan that flows out of the philosophy and foundational statements and that is based on current early education research and principles. The curriculum plan includes the following components: 1) an educational philosophy of teaching and how children learn based on early education research, 2) schoolwide expected student outcomes, 3) mapping of instruction for each age group, 4) incorporating overall goals and objectives aligned with state/national standards for each domain: spiritual, social, emotional, physical, cognitive, 5) developmentally appropriate instructional methods, 6)**

instructional resources, and 7) evaluation and assessment strategies (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

Instructional Strategies

- 5.3 Bible content and instruction are required in the core curriculum.** (ACSI will accept alternative and innovative ways of meeting the Bible content and instruction requirement. The school's method can be approved for meeting (or exceeding) compliance in advance of an accreditation visit by submitting a description of the process the school uses to the team chairperson and ACSI regional office. The plan must include: goals, objectives and outcomes; assessment; how it meets the spirit of the indicator and rubric.) (E/S)
- 5.3a There is age-appropriate biblical instruction integrated into the core curriculum. (EE)
- 5.4 The school systematically evaluates its instructional strategies, learning activities, and instructional technology, ensuring they are research-based and reflect sound educational practice. (C)
- 5.5 Instructional strategies and equitable learning activities focus on active student engagement, the achievement of essential knowledge and skills, biblical wisdom and understanding, and higher-order thinking skills. (E/S)
- 5.5a Appropriate instructional strategies include the following developmental domains: spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive to include Bible, language, math, and science/discovery (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)
- 5.5b Teachers incorporate appropriate instructional strategies and learning activities in the lesson plans that reflect the goals of the program and connect with the overall expected child outcomes (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)
- 5.5c The daily schedule provides for stability, security, and flexibility to meet the group's needs, capitalizing on the children's interest and attention span. The classroom schedule includes a balance of activities that are age appropriate in length (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

Assessment

- 5.6 There is a systematic process in place for the assessment of student learning and development that includes multiple assessment measures over time to accomplish the expected student outcomes.** (See Appendix F.) (E/S)
- 5.6a Developmentally appropriate child assessments such as portfolios, work samples, and observation data are collected at least twice per year and shared with parents. (EE)
- 5.7 The school analyzes student performance data including: 1) implications of schoolwide trends seen from year to year; 2) monitoring the progress of individual students; 3) disaggregation of data by gender, ethnicity, and other factors important to the school; and 4) comparison to outside groups. Teachers are trained in data assessment and analysis for program improvement.** (See Appendix F.) (E/S)
- 5.8 The school uses the analysis of data in making educationally sound decisions regarding students, instructional strategies, and programs to better attain expected student outcomes. (E/S)
- 5.9 The school has implemented procedures for regular communication of student achievement to all stakeholders. This communication includes the following: 1) major tests used; 2) schoolwide trends in achievement; 3) accomplishment of schoolwide expected student outcomes; and 4) annual progress of individual students. (C)

Instructional Resources

- 5.10 Age-appropriate instructional and information resources which support teaching and learning are appropriate in number, culturally representative of the students, and include the Christian distinctives of the school. (C)
- 5.11 Information resources are readily accessible to students and staff. Training for students and staff on the use of information resources is supported by specially trained staff. (C)
- 5.11a Passive media (television, DVDs, CDs), when used, meet the following requirements: 1) are appropriate to the age and the attention span; 2) enhance the effectiveness and values of the program; 3) are previewed by the staff for overall content and age appropriateness; 4) serve as an occasional supplement to daily activities rather than a significant part; and 5) include appropriate teacher involvement in introducing and following

up the viewing with questions and activities that elicit children's active involvement. (EE)

5.11b If the program includes screen time for children, program guidelines have been developed for classroom use to ensure children's active involvement. Guidelines address strategies to ensure interactive involvement and consider the needs of the young learner. (EE)

5.12 Instructional technology competencies are incorporated into the teaching and learning process to improve the achievement of expected student outcomes. Well-integrated technology promotes creativity, collaboration, innovation, research skills, problem-solving, and digital citizenship. (C)

Policies and Procedures

5.13 The school has a written classroom management philosophy and policies that are developmentally appropriate and biblically based, and they are implemented effectively and communicated to the school community. (E/S)

5.13a Child guidance policies and classroom management procedures are in place and published for parents and staff. The policies and procedures support staff in maintaining effective orderly classrooms (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

5.14 Written policies and procedures are in place to allocate and protect instructional time and learning opportunities and support student learning and graduation requirements. The number of students per classroom is monitored for effective learning and student-teacher relationships. (C)

5.15 The school instructs teachers and students in the ethical and moral use and evaluation of source materials, including verification, attribution and credit, appropriate referencing, and media literacy. (E/S)

5.16 The school has, and regularly evaluates, a technology plan that includes the acquisition, inventory, and maintenance of software and hardware as well as program philosophy, acceptable use policies, student learning outcomes, and strategies for integration of technology into the curriculum. (C)

Brief Narrative of the Overall Instructional Program (Part A): In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance

of the overall instructional program. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Brief Narrative of the Instructional Program

Disciplines (Part B): A subject area assessment for each of the following: Bible, mathematics, science, technology, language arts (including reading), social studies/history, classic and modern language, art, music, physical education, and any other area of instruction includes an assessment of strengths and weaknesses with supporting evidence and suggested improvements.

The steering committee will generally complete the introductory/overview section of each school division (if the school has divided this section into divisions or school units). Teachers, however, should be assigned to complete a section of the instructional program overview.

The school can choose to complete this subsection in a variety of ways. Typically, the faculty will address the "subjects overview" for the overall instructional program content. The school could choose to expand the subjects within each school unit, but that is not required. In the early education program, teachers will be assigned to review all curricular plans for a specific age group. In the elementary school, sections will be completed for every subject. In the junior high/middle school and high school, each department or instructional discipline will complete a section.

EE Programs: The early education curriculum plan/guide is most effective when presented in domains (spiritual, physical, social/emotional, and cognitive), highlighting the goals for children in these areas. Within the cognitive domain, special attention will be given to subject/content areas. The self-study will include an assessment of the strengths of the curriculum map and identified areas for improvement. Early education programs and classrooms naturally tend to implement the curricular plans in an interdisciplinary fashion (content delivery across subject areas).

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.

Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence:


The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Curriculum guides/mapping and policy and procedures for formal review and revision
- Instructional guides, including curriculum mapping and/or scope and sequence charts
- Evaluation criteria for improvement or change
- Sample/example lesson plans
- Assessment results (standardized, formative, summative, comparative, and other)
- Technology plan
- Evidence of trained personnel not included in Standard 4
- Acceptable usage policy
- Formal process for faculty input on selection of materials
- Examples of biblical integration into all areas of the instructional program
- Student engagement in the classroom and classroom strategies that encourage active involvement of students in their own learning
- Faculty use of various instructional strategies and methods to provide for a variety of learning opportunities for students
- Indications that school climate is important and is used to help guide school decisions
- Evidence of communicating student performance to all stakeholders
- Early education child guidance policies and procedures

Supporting Evidence

- Instructions for alignment of lesson plans to learning expectations for students
- Agendas/minutes of grade-level and/or department meetings
- Master class schedule
- Program and/or project descriptions
- Textbooks used
- Handbooks
- Student work samples

- Classroom grading policy
- Graduation requirements, credits, GPA explanation
- Comprehensive library materials collection
- Circulation data for media materials
- Budget allocation system
- Inventory of instructional media equipment
- Steps taken within the school to link student learning to a set of standards
- Research and use of data on the effectiveness of improvement strategies
- Willingness of the school leadership to support strategies for improved instruction
- Differentiated instruction provided to students who have specific needs
- Consistency of learning and sequence across grade levels
- Continuing efforts within the school to articulate learning both horizontally and vertically
- Ways in which the school provides for the reteaching of students who have not met expectations
- Curriculum that is monitored and revised
- Students and staff have access to instructional technology
- Instructional activities have support from and interaction with information and media services
- Faculty can submit needs for educational purposes
- Circulation trends 

STANDARD 6: STUDENT CARE

■ Written policies and procedures are in place to ensure students' well-being—emotional, physical, spiritual, and academic. The school facilities (buildings and grounds) are appropriate in size, furnishings, and space to meet the stated philosophy, mission, and vision for the number and age of students served. The entire campus is a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for teaching and learning. Safety procedures are documented and clearly understood, and they address the prevention and identification of abuse, bullying, and the presence of unwelcome guests. A relevant and thorough crisis management plan is in place, and the faculty and staff have been trained appropriately to handle various emergency situations. Regular drills and practices occur to assist in preparation for crisis events. Transportation guidelines for staff and students are developed, and written policies and procedures are in place.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

Crisis Planning

Crisis planning is essential to ensure that a safe and nurturing environment is provided for the students, faculty, and staff. School preparedness for potential threats to the environment, natural disasters, and emergency situations must be documented via a well-developed plan that outlines the steps to be taken in the event of a crisis. Evidence of scheduled training and education of all involved is provided and inclusive of evacuation plans, testing and drill exercises, parent notification procedures, and compliance with local, state, federal, or provincial regulations. This plan must be updated regularly to be effective for the current status of the school.

Safety and Health

The health, safety, and welfare of all students are priorities for overall school programming. Consistent enforcement of policies and procedures that promote and ensure compliance with health regulations is imperative. Documentation of faculty and staff training in first aid and CPR, guidelines for the storage and distribution of medication, special medical needs, food allergies, and protocol on handling of communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens must be evident. There is ongoing documented review of policy and education of faculty in identification of signs and symptoms of possible child abuse or neglect and their role as mandatory reporters. Education of the

school population in harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) laws creates a culture that values each child. Pests and pesticides are handled as governing authorities dictate.

Food/Nutrition Services

Food and nutrition services are a component of school programming. Guidelines regarding the type of services provided must be outlined with attention to foodborne allergies. Compliance with governmental standards for the preparation, handling, storage, and delivery of food is required. Personnel guidelines are posted. Dining facilities must be hygienic and appropriate for the size of the school population and provide a positive atmosphere for peer and staff interactions.

Facilities

The facilities enhance the academic program and foster a positive reputation within the community. Safety and campus security are emphasized. Written documentation validates regular inspection and maintenance. Traffic flow patterns, playgrounds, and buildings are designed in a manner that allows for safe usage by staff and students. The master site plan outlines optimal usage of buildings and grounds for parking, play, and recreation while detailing plans for future expansion. Good stewardship and excellent maintenance of facilities honor God's provision.

Environment

The indoor and outdoor spaces communicate a sense of order, and they are aesthetically pleasing. The environment is clearly designed for the comfort and engagement of children. Space allocations are sufficient and appropriate. As possible, provisions are made to accommodate those who have exceptional physical needs.

Transportation

Safe and effective transport of students to and from school-related activities is a priority. Regular maintenance and inspection of vehicles complies with applicable regulations. Proof of insurance and an appropriate driver's license are documented for all drivers. Policies, procedures, and guidelines outlining behavior standards for students are communicated and rehearsed.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical. Indicators which are marked with an asterisk (*) **must** be met at the “compliance” level or higher for a team visit to occur.

Crisis Planning

- 6.1*** A comprehensive written security and crisis management plan has been developed, regularly reviewed, and implemented, and it is supported by appropriate training for all staff and students. (C)
- 6.2 The school communicates with legal authorities (i.e., the fire department, police department, and other applicable agencies), parents, media, and community members when a crisis or a major incident occurs. (C)

Safety and Health

- 6.3 The school complies with applicable local, state, and federal laws regarding safety and health issues. (C)
- 6.3a The program does not offer foods that present a risk of choking to children. Food is cut into small pieces no larger than a one-fourth-inch square for infants and a one-half-inch square for toddlers. A written policy is communicated to all staff and parents. (EE)
- 6.4 Students are in compliance with the requirements of civil authorities regarding immunizations, physical examinations, and communicable diseases. Records of health services rendered to students (including accidents and injuries) are appropriately noted and filed. (C)
- 6.5** Written policies and procedures for all areas of health and safety services have been developed, reviewed, and implemented. (C)

6.5a The program consults with a health care

professional to establish specific written policies that guide the consistent implementation of a wellness and illness management plan as well as staff training in their responsibilities (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

- 6.5b The program has an established plan for sanitizing toys and equipment regularly. Toys that have been contaminated by saliva or other body secretions are washed and sanitized before they are used by another child. (EE)
- 6.6** Biblically-based plans and procedures are developed that educate the school community regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Students and families are educated on how to build biblically-based relationships, have caring interaction, and resolve conflicts with peers. (C)
- 6.7*** The school has developed policies and procedures that promote child safety; define conduct expectations for staff and volunteers; and provide training for staff, volunteers, and students. Staff training includes legal reporting responsibilities in cases of alleged or suspected child abuse, neglect, or other areas in which reporting is mandated. (C)

Food/Nutrition Services

- 6.8 The school complies with local, state, and federal regulations regarding preparation, delivery, handling, and storage of food. The school provides a suitable and hygienic eating space for the staff and students. (C)
- 6.9 Meals and snacks offered by the school are based on sound nutritional standards. (C)
- 6.9a The nutritional needs of children are met and supported by the staff and facilities (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

Facilities, Environment, and Transportation

- 6.10*** Required local, state, and federal legal standards for fire protection, sanitation, and transportation are met. (C)
- 6.11 The school maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe, secure, and orderly. (C)
- 6.12** The facilities are secure and suitable for the size of the school; the school environment is monitored and maintained to ensure it is conducive to the instruction and development of the whole child. (C)

- 6.12a The program provides an ongoing maintenance plan that ensures the health and safety of the children (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)
- 6.12b Sinks and toilets are readily accessible to children. (EE)
- 6.12c Developmentally appropriate equipment, including child-sized tables and chairs and adequate furniture in good repair, are provided in each classroom to meet the needs of the children. (EE)
- 6.13 The recreation area/playground, common areas, and athletic areas are safe, age appropriate, and large enough for the number of students. (E/S)
- 6.13a The early education playground supports the developmental growth of children within a context of safety (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)
- 6.14 Facilities planning is in place to address future programs; enrollment changes; staff, facility, and technology needs; as well as future capital improvements. (C)
- 6.15 Vehicles and drivers used to transport students for all school activities follow the school's policies as well as government and insurance regulations. (C)
- 6.16 Written policies and procedures are in place for routine safety inspections, service, and repair of school-owned vehicles and for reporting vehicle accidents—including communication with all constituents. (C)
- 6.17 Appropriate health, safety, and supervision practices ensure the specific needs of infants and toddlers are met (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.

Areas for Continuous School Improvement:

State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence:


The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Crisis management and emergency plan
- Building evacuation plan displayed in classrooms, offices, and other rooms used by students
- Food services guidelines and inspection reports, if applicable
- Schedules and documentation of required drills (e.g., fire or earthquake)
- Health policies, procedures, and guidelines (including medicine distribution and storage)
- Student and faculty health files
- Documentation of known allergies
- Documentation showing compliance with local, state, federal, or provincial regulations, when appropriate
- Reporting procedures, policies, and training for child abuse/neglect/bullying prevention
- Written process describing how facilities are regularly inspected and maintained and data demonstrating the quality of these processes
- Transportation policy/plan
- Documentation showing compliance with all local, state, federal, or provincial regulations, when appropriate
- Master site/security plan
- Crisis plans notification procedures
- Parent notification procedures

Supporting Evidence

- Regular updates to evacuation and crisis management plans
- Guidelines posted in appropriate places for food services
- Sample health forms and immunization records
- Copies of CPR and first aid certification
- Field trip policies, procedures, forms

- Copies of recent menus for meals/snacks
- Student emergency profile forms (follows the students for activities)
- Indication that facilities and vehicles are regularly inspected and maintained
- Indications of a safe and orderly environment
- Vehicular flow and traffic safety
- Surveys
- Budget allocation for maintenance and facility development
- Environmental studies
- Building and/or transportation usage forms
- Evidence of insurance, if appropriate
- Any other documentation to verify compliance with this standard
- Policy for appropriately sized food for infants and toddlers
- Policy for wellness and illness management plan 

STANDARD 7: CHARACTER, VALUES, AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF STUDENTS

■ The school shall provide for spiritual nurture and discipleship of its students with the goal of developing a biblical worldview. Spiritual nurturing of Christlike character is planned, intentional, and systematic in implementation. Mentoring and discipleship experiences are necessary components in a spiritual formation strategy. Students are given opportunities to serve others and develop a Christlike attitude toward the poor, needy, and vulnerable.

A commitment to a community of faith is modeled by the faculty and emphasized to all students. Spiritual formation assessment is integral to effective and ongoing improvement of the school program.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

The distinctive nature of a Christian school is that it seeks to produce rational, reasoned, and responsible Christian citizens—rational in that it is shaping its students to be spiritually-formed thinkers, reasoned in that Christian schooling trains pupils for the thoughtful use of a biblical worldview, responsible because it deliberately educates students for Christian living.

The educational process is holistic in that it addresses the development of mind, body, and spirit. Spiritual principles, then, are not presented in isolation; they become embedded into daily routines and activities. Truths are presented, taught, and modeled in ways appropriate to the developmental level of the students. Schoolwide expected student outcomes include strong character, evidence of values consistent with a person of faith, and a God-centered pattern of life.

Christian schools should not be teaching students to withdraw from the world but to love God with all their heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37); demonstrate growth in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52); demonstrate the ability to live in the world as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–14); and demonstrate the sacrificial giving of themselves and their resources to reflect the essence and love of Christ who lives and dwells with them (Romans 12:1).

Measurement of students' growth in spiritual formation and attainment of schoolwide expected student outcomes in the spiritual/affective domain is an integral component of the school's assessment strategy in order to identify trends in the student body for program improvement.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical.

- 7.1 **Schoolwide expected student outcomes include character development, acquisition of Christian values, and spiritual formation. (C)**
- 7.2 Christlike respect, compassion, and caring for self and all others is taught and demonstrated by school personnel. (C)
- 7.3 Mentoring and discipleship experiences focus on spiritual formation, character development, and the instilling of Christian values. The school provides a structure whereby each student is known personally by at least one adult who can provide support for that student's spiritual formation. (E/S)
- 7.3a Teachers model mentoring and discipleship with each other to demonstrate Christlike attitudes and actions that directly and indirectly influence spiritual growth, character development, and Christian values in the children. (EE)
- 7.4 **Board, administration, faculty, staff, and student interactions reflect the attitude of Christ. Communication among them demonstrates sensitivity and responsiveness to the individual needs, interests, and temperaments of the students. (C)**
- 7.5 All aspects of the school and its instructional program reflect developmentally appropriate application of a biblical worldview and Christlike character and values. (C)
- 7.6 Age-appropriate opportunities for service and missions, including compassionate outreach to the poor, needy, or vulnerable, are provided as a means of spiritual growth and formation. (C)
- 7.7 Active participation in a local Christian church

community is required of the faculty and emphasized within the school's philosophy and goals. (C)

7.8 Assessment of the spiritual development of students is intentionally included in the ongoing evaluation of the school's effectiveness in formally measuring its schoolwide expected student outcomes. (E/S)

Brief Narrative: In one to two pages, explain how the standard is met or what the barriers, if any, are to compliance. If the school is not found to be in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant? Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies. (Use your indicator ratings, documentation, and other sources to validate your explanation.)

Strengths: State one to three strengths that exemplify compliance in this area.


Areas for Continuous School Improvement: State one to three goals that reflect continuous school improvement in this area.

Required Documentation and Supporting Evidence: The Required Documentation must be evaluated as the school rates themselves on the indicators. Provide all required documentation and supporting evidences used by the school in rating the indicators. These will verify compliance with the standard.

Required Documentation

- Schoolwide expected student outcomes
- Handbooks
- Guidelines and policies related to spiritual assessment
- Mentoring and discipleship activities

Supporting Evidence

- Chapel schedules/community service schedules
- Surveys/student feedback/parent and community feedback
- Publications
- Community outreaches
- Classroom observations and records of students' questions and conversations about spiritual matters 

STANDARD 8: CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

■ The school must, with appropriate stakeholder input, systematically develop and annually update a continuous school improvement plan (CSIP). The plan, based on the school's philosophy, mission, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcomes, includes specific goals, as well as action items. The process is driven by data collection and analysis. This plan must have significant focus on how it will promote organizational growth and high achievement of schoolwide expected student outcomes. The CSIP reflects a pervasive culture of ongoing improvement and accountability. The CSIP should reflect major goals determined as priorities through the self-study process.

STANDARD JUSTIFICATION

The CSIP may include areas where the school is pursuing its vision, developing innovative and creative ideas, pursuing academic and faith development, and establishing new strategies for growth and development. The major recommendations from the team report must be included in the revised CSIP. The head of school is ultimately responsible for the ongoing updating of the CSIP.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

All indicators in **boldface** are considered critical.

- 8.1 The school improvement plan is developed by utilizing a variety of organizational, achievement, and survey data and input from all stakeholder groups. (C)**
- 8.2 The CSIP reflects the fulfillment of the philosophy, mission, and vision of the school and the attainment of schoolwide academic and non-academic expected student outcomes and school effectiveness. (C)
- 8.3 The planning process is organizationally

comprehensive and establishes goals and priorities for development. (C)

- 8.4 Each action item in the improvement plan addresses the fiscal, personnel, resources, and time implications for implementation. (C)
- 8.5 The school evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its improvement plan and regularly communicates the results to all stakeholders. (C)

Supporting Evidence

- Student performance and achievement data
- The degree to which staff have analyzed student results in the context of school improvement plan interventions and programs
- A broad range of involvement by constituency in the design of the school improvement plan
- Alignment of the school improvement goals with needs identified in the profile and supported by data analysis
- Professional development activities that are aligned with and a part of the school improvement plan
- A variety of baseline and interval data to describe progress toward the goals
- The extent to which the improvement agenda has been widely discussed among constituents
- Various communication techniques used to inform constituency regarding school improvement efforts and successes
- A rigorous data-analysis process to evaluate the degree of success in goal attainment
- A school improvement plan that focuses on increased student achievement
- Agendas/minutes of meetings regarding school improvement activities and results
- Communications to constituency regarding school improvement activities and results
- Success demonstrated in reaching goals of the school improvement plan

For each action plan section, include:

- Statement of area for improvement (goal)
- Time frame


- Specific action steps to achieve the goal
- Person responsible for the action
- Resources needed
- Action due date
- Evidence of progress
- Communication to constituents
- Expected schoolwide learning results this improvement addresses

A school may create a document, chart, or spreadsheet with the components listed above or they may use the template provided by ACSI. The school's CSIP is required to be attached as documentation to Standard 8.

Required Documentation

- Attach current CSIP to self-study
- School profile

- A plan that includes components that provide specific goals, a set of appropriate assessments, a set of interventions expected to cause student growth to occur, and a plan for ensuring that the staff have the skills to implement the plan
- A continuous review process to ensure ongoing monitoring and adjustment of the improvement plan

The following appendixes were developed to provide schools with more clarity and direction as they progress in their self-study and begin the accreditation process. Please note that there are additional resources and tools made available at the ACSI website (<https://www.acsi.org/schoolaccreditationdocuments>). 

APPENDIX A: ACSI MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

ACSI MISSION STATEMENT

ACSI exists to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide as they prepare students academically and inspire them to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

ACSI VISION STATEMENT

ACSI will become a leading international organization that promotes Christian education and provides training and resources to Christian schools and Christian educators, resulting in

- schools that contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning and that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant; and
- educators who embody a biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and discipling, and embrace personal and professional growth.

APPENDIX B: CRITICAL INDICATORS

All of the standards in *REACH* should be met at an acceptable level for a school to be identified as “accredited.” In support of this acceptable level, the following indicators are critical to meeting the standards of ACSI accreditation.

INDICATORS

Symbols next to indicators apply as follows:

- (C) Comprehensively applies to every level of a school being accredited (grades EE–12)
- (E/S) Applies only to K–12 schools
- (EE) Applies only to early education programs that are stand-alone or a part of a K–12 school being accredited

Indicators which are marked with an asterisk (*) **must** be met at the “compliance” level or higher for a team visit to occur.

1.0 PHILOSOPHY AND FOUNDATIONS

- 1.1 The statement of faith and the philosophy, mission, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected student outcome statements of the school are established and are reviewed regularly and systematically in a collaborative manner. (C)
- 1.3 The foundational documents are consistently applied as integrative, coordinating, and examining devices throughout all aspects of the programs, operations, and curriculum. (C)

2.0 GOVERNANCE AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

- 2.2 The governance and executive leadership team of the school reflects a clear Christ-centered governance and executive leadership model. A policy is in place that requires a testimony and evidence of faith in Jesus Christ from all board members and executive leadership. (C)
- 2.5 Established written policies and procedures promote effective operations in admissions, governance, finance, and other operational aspects. Appropriate legal documents and clearly articulated articles of incorporation, governing body policies, and bylaws are established and are available for review. (C)

- 2.6 Established written policies are in place to see that the educational and developmental needs of each admitted student are being met on the basis of biblical principles, professional ethics, and high standards. Staff members are sensitive to the culture, gender, language, and special needs of students and their families. (C)
- 2.7 Financial resources are available to fulfill the mission and programs of the school, and financial operations and decisions are conducted with integrity and in accordance with biblical principles. Income received from tuition is appropriately used for education-related expenses within the school. (C)
- 2.9 A review of the school’s finances is conducted by an external CPA, who has no vested interest in the school, at the time of initial accreditation and renewal. The annual statement of financial practices is submitted with the annual accreditation report. (See *Options for Meeting Indicator 2.9* for details.) (C)
- 2.11* The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, and it is in good standing with all regulatory agencies. (C)

3.0 HOME AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND STUDENT SERVICES

- 3.1 Enrollment is sufficient to establish the viability of the school and all divisions it offers (i.e., EE, elementary, secondary). (C)
- 3.7* The nondiscrimination statement is published and evident in the actions, relationships, and programs of the school. (C)
- 3.10 Confidential records of students are complete, organized, current, accessible only to appropriate personnel, compliant with applicable legal requirements, and kept in a safe location. (C)
- 3.15 Staff members receive professional development on how to intentionally prepare and maintain an emotionally healthy environment (outlined in the *EE Evidence Guide for REACH Indicators*). (EE)

4.0 PERSONNEL

- 4.1 Each staff member has a clear testimony of faith in Christ, has signed the school’s statement of faith, and endorses the school’s code of ethics/

APPENDIX B: CRITICAL INDICATORS

lifestyle statement. (See *Guidelines for Outside Contracted Teachers or Instructors.*) (C)

- 4.2 The executive leadership of the school ensures staff members know and understand the ethical considerations of their respective positions. Examples include: appropriate student/teacher relationships, confidentiality with student information, and use of copyrighted material. (C)
- 4.3* All personnel, including volunteers and substitute teachers, have the appropriate screening and background checks on file, and they are supervised by qualified staff. Orientation for new staff members is thorough and is conducted before any new staff have contact with the students. (See the *EE Annual Staff Training Guidelines.*) (C)
- 4.4 K–12 head of school and all K–12 principal qualifications are demonstrated in one of the following ways:
1. The K–12 head of school and all K–12 principals hold ACSI administrative certification OR current state, national, or provincial administrative certification* plus Christian philosophy and Bible requirements. (Other administrators, such as academic deans, directors of curriculum and instruction, assistant principals, etc. may be included with the teacher and professional staff certification required in Indicator 4.6.) Schools may use a combination of ACSI certification and state, national, or provincial certification, as demonstrated on the Certification Spreadsheet, to meet the indicator.

OR

1. The school has an approved School-Based Professional Development (SPD) plan, sufficiently documenting the ongoing professional development of the administration within that plan, with annual reporting to ACSI. See www.acsi.org/school_based_pd for more information. An approved SPD plan would enable the school to fulfill indicator 4.4 without submitting a Certification Spreadsheet. (E/S)
- 4.5 All K–12 teachers hold, at minimum, a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university or an institution recognized by ACSI. (Contact the

ACSI Certification Department for information regarding recognized institutions.) (E/S)

- 4.6 K–12 faculty qualifications (which includes teaching faculty and professional positions such as guidance counselors, athletic directors, library/media specialists, etc.) are demonstrated in one of the following ways:
1. A minimum of 80 percent of faculty and professional staff, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs), hold current ACSI certification OR current state, national, or provincial certification* plus Christian philosophy and Bible requirements. Schools may use a combination of individuals holding ACSI certification and individuals holding state, national, or provincial certification, as demonstrated on the Certification Spreadsheet, to meet the indicator. (See *Guidelines for Outside Contracted Teachers and Instructors.*)

OR

2. The school has an approved School-Based Professional Development (SPD) plan, sufficiently documenting the ongoing professional development of K-12 faculty within that plan, with annual reporting to ACSI. See www.acsi.org/school_based_pd for more information. An approved SPD plan would enable the school to fulfill indicator 4.6 without submitting a Certification Spreadsheet. (E/S)

5.0 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AND RESOURCES

- 5.1 The curriculum documents developed by the school provide a well-documented biblical basis consistent with the goal of developing a biblical worldview in students. (See *Guidelines for Accepting Credits from Other Sources.*) (C)
- 5.2 The curriculum guides/maps drive the instructional program. The guides/maps are current and include the following components: 1) schoolwide expected student outcomes, 2) course goals and objectives, 3) biblical integration concepts, 4) school-selected standards, 5) resources, 6) time allotted for each unit, and 7) assessments. A document, often called a *Scope and Sequence*, is available to guide the overall curriculum plan through

APPENDIX B: CRITICAL INDICATORS

electronic means (curriculum mapping software) or a traditional written format. The guides/maps are accessible to all faculty and inform instruction that clearly values the development of the whole child – spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. (See Appendix H.) (E/S)

- 5.3 Bible content and instruction are required in the core curriculum. (E/S)
- 5.6 There is a systematic process in place for the assessment of student learning and development that includes multiple assessment measures over time to accomplish the expected student outcomes. (See Appendix F.) (E/S)
- 5.7 The school analyzes student performance data including: 1) implications of schoolwide trends seen from year to year; 2) monitoring the progress of individual students; 3) disaggregation of data by gender, ethnicity, and other factors important to the school; and 4) comparison to outside groups. Teachers are trained in data assessment and analysis for program improvement. (See Appendix F.) (E/S)

6.0 STUDENT CARE

- 6.1* A comprehensive written security and crisis management plan has been developed, regularly reviewed, and implemented, and it is supported by appropriate training for all staff and students. (C)
- 6.5 Written policies and procedures for all areas of health and safety services have been developed, reviewed, and implemented. (C)
- 6.6 Biblically-based plans and procedures are developed that educate the school community regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Students and families are educated on how to build biblically-based relationships, have caring interaction, and resolve conflicts with peers. (C)

- 6.7* The school has developed policies and procedures that promote child safety; define conduct expectations for staff and volunteers; and provide training for staff, volunteers, and students. Staff training includes legal reporting responsibilities in cases of alleged or suspected child abuse, neglect, or other areas in which reporting is mandated. (C)
- 6.10* Required local, state, and federal legal standards for fire protection, sanitation, and transportation are met. (C)
- 6.12 The facilities are secure and suitable for the size of the school; the school environment is monitored and maintained to ensure it is conducive to the instruction and development of the whole child. (C)

7.0 CHARACTER, VALUES, AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF STUDENTS

- 7.1 Schoolwide expected student outcomes include character development, acquisition of Christian values, and spiritual formation. (C)
- 7.4 Board, administration, faculty, staff, and student interactions reflect the attitude of Christ. Communication among them demonstrates sensitivity and responsiveness to the individual needs, interests, and temperaments of the students. (C)

8.0 CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 8.1 The school improvement plan is developed by utilizing a variety of organizational, achievement, and survey data and input from all stakeholder groups. (C)

APPENDIX C: OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Success in completing the self-study and in accomplishing accreditation depends on the investment of time and energy by the entire faculty and staff. The chief administrator/early education director assumes a major role in the leadership of the process; however, support is needed from the faculty and the board. Many responsibilities must be delegated to the faculty to accomplish the major goal of accreditation—school improvement. It is also imperative that the governing body/steering committee members and others be involved in the self-study process.

1. EXAMINATION OF PHILOSOPHY, GOALS, MISSION, AND SCHOOLWIDE EXPECTED STUDENT OUTCOMES

The faculty as a whole should examine the stated philosophy, goals, and mission of the school in relationship to the programs and services it offers. The philosophy, goals, and mission must be examined in light of the Scriptures to ensure that the foundational principles of the school are compatible with the biblical mandates for Christian education. Each accredited school is required to have established a set of schoolwide expected student outcomes that are well-known and regularly assessed. Schoolwide expected student outcomes identify what the school intentionally wishes to produce in the lives of its students and what the school intends that the student will become after his or her tenure in the school. Outcomes are based on the philosophy of the school as well as its statements of mission and vision and then personalized to the lives of the students. These outcome statements may take a variety of forms, but they should be clear, widely distributed across the school constituency, discussed by the staff, and consistently assessed. (See article *The Value of Student Expected Outcomes*.)

2. STEERING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT

A steering committee, which is responsible for the overall management and completion of the self-study, should be established. The head of school/early education director is usually a member of this committee, though not necessarily the chairperson. A vital function of the steering committee is to develop and follow a timetable for the completion of the self-study. Realistically, at least a year should be allowed for the self-study process.

3. SELF-STUDY SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Subcommittees must be established for the self-study, and assignments must be made for each

section of the accreditation manual and for the areas of the instructional program. After subcommittee assignments have been made, each subcommittee should carefully review and study its assigned section. It is imperative that each member of a subcommittee be thorough, yet concise, in completing his or her assigned tasks. When the report is completed to the satisfaction of the self-study subcommittee, it should then be presented to the steering committee for its consideration and evaluation. The steering committee has the final voice of approval concerning the report before it is presented to the entire faculty and staff for final approval.

One product of the committee report is a list of the major strengths and goals established for improvement and growth. These goals for improvement may be identified later by the steering committee as major areas for improvement as a schoolwide priority for Standard 8. However, they should still be included in the narrative or strengths/weaknesses for the section.

4. FACULTY, STAFF, AND BOARD REVIEWS

It is important that the entire faculty, staff, and board come to a consensus concerning the findings of the self-study. For this reason, each section of the self-study should be reviewed by the entire faculty and staff.

5. DURING THE VISITING TEAM'S ON-SITE VISIT

The responsibility of the administration, faculty, and staff during the visit is to be themselves, as much as possible, while the team members are visiting. Visiting team members are not there to evaluate individual teachers but to get a sense of the instructional quality of the school program. The staff should respond candidly in interviews but should not seek to air problems or issues with the visiting team.

6. AFTER ACCREDITATION

After accreditation the school must take the following steps:

- a. The staff should carefully read the entire visiting team report while giving special attention to the sections most closely associated with their responsibilities and to any major recommendations.
- b. A plan of action based on the insights of the visiting team and the subcommittees should be developed and communicated to the constituency. The plan

APPENDIX C: OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

should include recommendations from the visiting team report and items from the continuous school improvement plan section of the self-study.

- c. The school must respond to the major recommendations in the visiting team report and ultimately to all recommendations in the report and the findings of the subcommittees.
- d. An annual report must be filed with the ACSI regional office or the ACSI Global office. An interim report is due at the midpoint of the accreditation term for international schools and can be required for U.S. schools if deemed necessary.
- e. ACSI accreditation standards must be maintained, and a continuous effort to address the recommendations of the visiting team report is expected of an accredited school.

THE APPROPRIATE REGIONAL OR GLOBAL OFFICE WILL CONTACT THE SCHOOL 12 TO 18 MONTHS BEFORE THE ACCREDITATION EXPIRATION DATE TO SET A REVIEW TIMELINE FOR THE REACCREDITATION VISIT.

APPENDIX D: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

Writing the self-study is the critical ingredient in maximizing the value of the accreditation process. The self-study is foundational, addressing all the other components of the process. Therefore, it requires the best efforts of the faculty to prepare an accurate, complete, and well-written document. Writing the self-study is conducted by subcommittees that review, analyze, and evaluate every area of the school's program.

REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation provides a framework and a set of rubrics to guide the subcommittees through the process.

There are three basic commitments to a successful self-study:

1. A willingness to invest the necessary time, effort, and cost
2. The complete support of the entire school community—administration, board, faculty, staff, and parents
3. A commitment to make any changes that the self-study brings to light for the betterment of the school and student learning

The Steering Committee Duties

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 steering committee evaluates the report for accuracy, completeness, and thoroughness. Once approved by the steering committee, the report should be reviewed by the full faculty for their comments and input. Their suggestions are reviewed and incorporated. The report is then resubmitted to the steering committee.

The steering committee then accumulates the data that should be supplied with the report in an electronic fashion. Each artifact and document must be clearly labeled according to what section of the self-study it addresses. Copies of the self-study must be made available for all members of the visiting team six weeks before the visit. The steering committee is responsible for having available the appropriate documentation for the visiting team before and during the time they are on-site.

Subcommittee Duties

The function of the subcommittees is to accomplish the following:

1. Determine for each area what evidence is necessary to provide a concise, yet complete and accurate, response. For questions seeking analysis of quality or effectiveness, the subcommittee should investigate "what is" through observation, interviews, portfolios, or other evidence. The subcommittee should not assume that what is put forth as the curriculum, policies, and programs of the school is what is actually experienced by the students.
2. Investigate what is actually being implemented by the administration, taught by the faculty, and experienced by the children, students, and parents. After all relevant information has been collected, the subcommittee synthesizes the evidence and records "what is" by giving a summary response.
3. On the basis of its determination of "what is," the subcommittee compares its findings with the school's Christian philosophy and statement of objectives, including the schoolwide expected student outcomes. The subcommittee determines "what should be" by discussing each area that requires appraisal. The subcommittee should seek to reach consensus.
4. The *REACH Rubrics Manual* provides examples of what noncompliance, partial compliance, compliance, and exceeds compliance look like. They are examples for each category and not intended to capture all the implications of compliance. The subcommittee will base its work on the topics listed in the rubrics for their standard. For each rubric, the committee asks whether there is sufficient evidence to substantiate classification in one of the rubric categories and determine what additional evidence might help the subcommittee make this determination besides those listed as required in the standard section.
5. The concluding portion of each self-study section asks the subcommittee to identify areas of strengths and areas of most needed improvement. First, the subcommittee should clearly indicate 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. Second, the subcommittee identifies the areas of greatest strength and the most needed improvements. This list must be supportable from the responses

APPENDIX D: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

provided in the subcommittee's report. The process should be managed by the subcommittee chairpersons in such a way that there is a variety of input, discussion, and suggestions before the report is finalized and submitted.

6. Submit the subcommittee's report to the steering committee for review.

Each subcommittee will benefit by having a packet of materials from several sections of each of the *REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation* and *REACH Rubrics Manual*.

The following is recommended:

1. Words of thanks and encouragement from the steering committee
2. Timeline for the process
 - a. Prior to first meeting—read accreditation materials in their packet
 - b. Deadline for collecting required documentation
 - c. Deadline to identify and collect additional input/evidence as necessary to accurately determine compliance with each indicator
 - d. Meeting dates to review progress work assignments
 - e. Date to submit first draft of the subcommittee report to the steering committee
 - f. Date to complete second draft of subcommittee report, submit for faculty reading and feedback
3. Pages from the *REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation*
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Pages of their specific standard
 - c. Appendix B: Critical Indicators
 - d. Schoolwide Expected Student Outcomes
 - e. Appendix C: Overview of School Responsibilities
 - f. Appendix G: The Self-Study Outline
 - g. Glossary
 - h. Self-Study Sample Template
4. Pages from the *REACH Rubrics Manual*
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Pages for their standard
 - c. Standards/Indicator Checklist at the end of the manual

Subcommittee Assignments

The steering committee has great latitude in subcommittee formation. They should seek to bring fresh eyes to the self-assessment process and encourage all committee members to be constructive in their analysis and be committed to ongoing improvement for the sake of improved student attainment of the schoolwide expected student outcomes.

The following suggestions are possible stakeholders for subcommittee appointment.

1. Philosophy and Foundations
 - a. Governing body member
 - b. Executive leadership/early education director
 - c. Faculty member
 - d. Parent
 - e. Pastor
 - f. Mission representative
2. Governance and Executive Leadership
 - a. Governing body member
 - b. Admissions director
 - c. Financial officer
 - d. Executive leadership/early education director
 - e. Faculty member
 - f. Community member
3. Home and Community Relations and Student Services
 - a. Parent
 - b. Student leader
 - c. Guidance counselor
 - d. Faculty member
 - e. Parent-teacher organization representative
4. Personnel
 - a. Faculty member
 - b. Executive leadership/early education director
 - c. Governing body member
5. Instructional Program and Resources
 - a. Executive leadership/early education director
 - b. Governing body member
 - c. Parent
 - d. Student leader
 - e. Faculty members

The Instructional Program and Resources subcommittee generally completes the introductory

APPENDIX D: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

section for each school division: early education, elementary, middle school, and high school. However, teachers in each division will be assigned to complete a section of this standard. In the early education program, teachers will review all curricular plans for a specific age group. For the elementary school, sections will be completed for every subject: Bible, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, computer, foreign language. In the middle school and high school, each department will complete a section. Schools should also consider forming interdisciplinary subcommittees for this standard to promote improved understanding of objectives, methodologies, priorities, and perspectives between departments.

6. Student Care

- a. Faculty member
- b. Community member
- c. Coach
- d. Student organization leader
- e. Executive leadership/early education director
- f. Nurse
- g. Secretary
- h. Driver
- i. Food services personnel

7. Character, Values, and Spiritual Formation of Students

- a. Parent
- b. Student leader
- c. Guidance counselor
- d. Faculty members
- e. Executive leadership/early education director
- f. Governing member
- g. School chaplain

8. Other subcommittees may include:

- a. Logistics
- b. Hospitality
- c. Survey Administration
- d. Student Assessment

APPENDIX E: SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

A good school seeks multiple ways to gain input/feedback from its various constituent groups. The information gathered may be in reference to how well the school does with the academic program, the spiritual formation of students, or in more functional aspects such as regular communication. While the school can ask parents for their responses one-on-one or in small group meetings, it may be more efficient to use a survey. REACH has added a requirement for Indicators 3.6 and 8.1 to use surveys to obtain feedback.

Surveys can be designed by the school to ask specific questions or can come from organizations with expertise in this area who can also help with the norming of the survey on a larger population. Nationally-normed data is particularly helpful when it comes to knowing if the school program is rated as effective by a group of constituents in comparison to other schools.

If a school develops its own survey, the school will have averages to compare but no measures of significant difference, such as standard deviations, unless they collect data for many years and do the statistical analysis on those scores.

Once the survey(s) have been chosen, they should be administered at the beginning of the self-study process. They must be given within 12 months of the visiting team's arrival. Best practice would suggest that the surveys are given at least every other year. This is recommended for schools in candidacy as well (years one and three).

Minimum Response Rate Goals:

Staff—60%
Students—40%
Alumni—20%
Parents—20%

The questions in the “Survey Administration” section below should be answered first followed by the questions in the “Analysis Questions” section. The results and conclusions should be given to each of the subcommittees so they will be able to use them as input for their standard section work.

ACSI recommends a separate Survey Administration subcommittee to manage the decisions regarding choosing, administering, analyzing, and distributing the results of the surveys.

Survey Administration

1. List and describe each survey (name and company that wrote, published, or normed* the survey; group(s) to which it was given and why; response rate for each group) **Nationally-normed or other ACSI-approved surveys are required for dually-accredited AdvancED schools.*
2. Provide the actual survey and the survey results for each survey in graph or chart form. Identify the bands of high and low scores and explain how you determined those scores should be considered high or low.

Analysis

1. For each survey administered, answer whether the minimum response rate goal was met for each group (parents, alumni, students, and staff); any trends in the comments concerning the administration of the surveys; and any trends that were significant to address.
2. Discuss each constituent's group results. Address noted strengths, areas for improvement, variances between the groups, variations over time, and plans to address any scores which are lower than expected.
3. Discuss how the results confirm or conflict with other feedback measures the school has collected. These could be focus groups, informal surveys, classroom evaluations, etc.
4. Provide evidence of how data from surveys has been analyzed and used to adjust instruction, the school environment, or other aspects of the school program for the past three years.
5. Discuss how constituent feedback has helped further the mission of the school over the past three years.

APPENDIX F: STUDENT ASSESSMENT PROFILE

Information from student assessments inform the school regarding a wide variety of student performance measures. The results of these tests should be used to adjust instruction, make program modifications, or change conditions to support student learning. The following sections allow schools to present the results of their assessments and describe what was done with the information gathered.

Achievement Results

1. In narrative form present the academic accomplishments of the students. Include charts and graphs to help communicate student performance (Indicator 5.6). Be sure to include:
 - Summary achievement data that best represents the overall picture of student performance for the last three years. Be sure to include all grades which the school gives standardized assessments. Report this information in percentiles or stanines.
 - Examples showing multiple forms of assessment (include any national, norm-referenced, or criterion-referenced such as TerraNova3, ITBS, ACT, PSAT, SAT, MAP, DIBELS, AP Tests, etc.). See <http://www.capenet.org/brs.html> (click on assessment cut scores) for a list of nationally-normed achievement tests used for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. This document also includes average school scores in the top 15% of the nation in reading and mathematics for private schools. It may be helpful as a point of reference.
 - Correlations of test scores, if available.
2. Present evidence that the school analyzes student performance including disaggregation, trends, and comparison data (Indicator 5.7). Be sure to include:
 - Disaggregation of data by gender, ethnicity, and other factors important to the school such as length of time at the school, international students, ELL, etc.
 - Schoolwide trends, such as 1) subject areas 2) groups of students by graduation year over the last three years (if available)
 - Comparisons to outside groups such as national averages or other Christian schools in the region
 - Examples of how the school monitors individual growth in order to validate each student is making a year's academic growth (scaled scores, percentiles, etc.)
3. Present how non-academic expected student outcomes are assessed, and include a summary of the assessment results. (Indicators 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 7.1, 7.2, and 7.8) Be sure to include:
 - An explanation of how the non-academic expected student outcomes are assessed. Provide results in whatever form available (charts, narrative, benchmarks, survey results, etc.).
 - Examples of how this analysis of assessment data has helped make programmatic or instructional improvements.

Analysis

After the student achievement information has been provided in graphs, charts, tables, or narratives, answer the questions below in brief narrative paragraphs. Focus on the analysis of the information presented.

1. Describe why the school chose the assessments which were chosen. How are the assessments the school uses a good fit for the curriculum?
2. Describe how the school ensures that tests are administered with fidelity. Also include: the security of materials of tests administered in-house; accommodations/modifications of testing conditions, inclusions of those scores, and the basis for those decisions.
3. Provide evidence of how data from assessments have been analyzed and used to adjust instruction, make program modifications, or change conditions that support student learning. Include examples of instruction which has been adjusted based on the analysis of test scores for student groups, classroom, curriculum, or program and training of staff on data analysis. How and when does this training occur? What staff is involved?
4. After analyzing trends (#2 in Achievement Results) provide explanations as to why these trends, positive or negative, might be occurring. Provide strategies to address any scores that are lower than would be expected and strategies to address any scores that show a gap between comparable subgroups.
5. Discuss how the use of formative assessments fits into an overall assessment plan (include classroom assessments and progress monitoring).
6. Explain how assessments help further the mission of the school.

APPENDIX G: THE SELF-STUDY OUTLINE

While working through the ePlatform each of the following need to be completed:

School Snapshot

1. **Introductory statement:** Brief description including the location and ownership
2. **Vision, Mission, and Future Goals:** If all goes well, what do you envision the school could look like in three to five years?
3. **Historical overview:** Include the following : foundation, original mission and purpose of the school, current mission and purpose if changed, significant historical developments, accreditation history, and major awards/recognitions.
4. **Demographic portrait:** Provide a data-supported demographic portrait of the school and its various constituencies. The portrait should include descriptive summaries of children, students, faculty, administration, board, parents, and the wider geographic community, as well as survey data from each of the constituent groups, when applicable. Below are samples of what might normally be documented in a demographic portrait:
 - a. Basic data—school name, address, phone, e-mail, the head of school’s name, contact information
 - b. Campus locations and grades or age levels seeking accreditation EE–12
 - c. Governance structure: church sponsored/church supported/independent, incorporation status, primary functions of the governing body, number of governing body members, and how they are chosen or elected
 - d. Executive leadership and personnel: degrees or credentials of the head of school, key leadership team members and roles, number of faculty and staff
 - e. Organization and enrollment: program type and number of students in each level—early education, primary, elementary, middle or junior high, and high school; identify any significant groups of unique populations such as international students, special needs, or first nations students
 - f. Instructional program: a general description of the type of instructional program offered, online and/or blended learning, mentioning any

special learning needs programs; include core instructional emphasis, schoolwide expected student outcomes, and detailed curriculum documents to be made available for the team to review electronically

- g. Facilities: number of classrooms; specialty rooms such as library, computer labs, gym, music/art rooms; and overall acreage
- h. Finance: size of the annual school budget, recent or current capital campaigns, tuition and fee costs
- i. Family and student descriptions: geographic communities served, socioeconomic levels, cultural descriptors, denominational backgrounds

5. Reaccreditation Visit Update

- a. Identify any **major changes** at the school since the last visit.
- b. Summarize **progress on the continuous school improvement program (CSIP)** and how addressing the updated CSIP has made an impact on student learning in the last three years.
- c. Summarize how the school addressed the **major recommendations** left by the visiting committee from the previous full self-study; address what was accomplished and whether or not the recommendations are completed or still in progress.

6. Survey Information (see Appendix E)

7. Student Assessment Profile (see Appendix F)

8. Self-Study Process

- a. Explain the process used by the school to conduct its self-study (gathering evidence, agreeing on ratings, and writing the summaries).
- b. Explain how committees were established, how the steering committee guided the overall process, and how approval for the final report was gained by the administration and the board.
- c. Describe the timeline. This section should demonstrate that broad involvement and collaboration were accomplished in the self-study process—involving all stakeholder groups: students, parents, board, faculty, and administration. (Refer to Appendix D for more detailed information.)

APPENDIX G: THE SELF-STUDY OUTLINE

9. Conclusion Summary

After completing the self-study, write a brief narrative that identifies two to three overall strengths and two to three major areas for improvement. Please note what evidence you have reviewed and what particular stakeholder feedback helped you determine these areas. The areas for improvement should be addressed in your continuous school improvement plan.

Standards & Indicators: For each standard the school will:

1. Rate the school on each of the indicators within the eight standards.
2. Provide a brief narrative explanation of how the school is meeting the standard. Identify what data most relevant to mission attainment the school regularly collects in this standard area and what systems are in place to analyze the data and ensure implementation of improvement strategies.
3. Describe one to three areas that describe strengths that exceed compliance in this standard. Reference your school's ratings on the indicators. What measures might the school need to take to keep these areas strong?
4. State one to three goals that target needed improvement in this standard. Reference your school's ratings on the indicators. If the school is not in compliance, what needs to occur for it to become compliant?
5. Include all required documentation.

Requested Information Tables

1. School's Demographics
2. Self-Study Committees - a listing of each committee and its members who were a part of the self-study

Please note that early education support documents can be found online.

APPENDIX H: CURRICULUM GUIDE/PLAN AND MAPPING (K-12)

A quality school places a high priority on the continuous development of its instructional program and the documentation that guides that program. At each grade level taught and in each secondary course, an instructional program includes far more than the contents of any textbook. The curriculum guide/map is a description of what is taught throughout the school, and as such 1) describes the school's instructional program, 2) helps to ensure continuity between grade levels and subject areas, and 3) provides a basis for evaluation of the school's instructional program.

- Resources, including textbooks: The required and supplemental instructional materials that are a part of the instructional program are specified.
- Integrative elements: The integrative elements are the key biblical, Christian worldview or scriptural concepts used to tie the content to the school's Christian mission and spiritual formation outcomes. Rather than a list of Bible verses, these elements should be connective concepts that make appropriate references between content and the school's Christian distinctive.

It is understood that the guide/map development process takes time and that it is revisited on a regular basis to keep it effective and applicable. While the initial development of a site-specific curriculum document will take several years, the true value is found in the ongoing revisitation of those documents, the adjustment and revision that keep them current, and the updating in response to new educational research, instructional trends, and emerging content. As a school matures and adjusts its instructional program, the curriculum guide/plan must change as well, reflecting improvements to instruction, changes in supportive materials, and expansion of the school's biblical integration component.

A well-documented curriculum guide/map provides guidance to new teachers, and it is the basis for revisions to the instructional program, including the selection of the most appropriate textbooks and supplemental materials. In this respect, it is a tool to ease the work of the teacher.

A school's curriculum guide/map should be a collaborative effort of teachers in the same department or grade level as well as those above and below it.

Members of the faculty at other levels should review the guide for a given level. A separate curriculum guide/map should be developed for each school division. A curriculum guide/map must be complete enough to be useful, and it must be organized in a manner that is consistent and practical.

A. The following list of components for each instructional area* should be included in the curriculum guide/map:

- Introduction and educational philosophy, including the biblical basis for each course: The introduction and educational philosophy is a narrative statement that includes the subject or grade level for which the curriculum guide/map is designed, the school's approach to that subject, the biblical foundation for teaching this subject, and any suggestions that might help the users of the guide with this course or content.
- Scope and sequence of instruction for each subject area at each grade level: The scope and sequence of instruction indicates the breadth of the content to be taught and the order in which it will be taught.
- Time frame for each instructional component (i.e., course and units): The time frame specifies the amount of time spent on each course or for each unit of instruction.
- Overall instructional goals for each course: The instructional goals identify the general objectives of large blocks of instruction, such as yearlong or semester courses.

B. The following items should be added as the school works toward completing and finalizing the development of its curriculum guides/maps:

- Schoolwide expected student outcomes (academic and non-academic) are what the school targets for all students to know, believe, understand, prefer, and be able to do upon completion of the school's program. These schoolwide expected student outcomes are also regularly assessed by the school to help determine the school's progress in achieving its mission and are used to inform program and instructional improvement. These may be included at various levels depending on how the school organizes its curriculum guide.
- Specific instructional objectives for each unit: Specific instructional objectives are the skills or

APPENDIX H: CURRICULUM GUIDE/PLAN AND MAPPING (K-12)

concepts a student attains when the instruction of a unit or a lesson is completed.

- **Instructional methods:** Instructional methods are the techniques used by a teacher for instruction (e.g., hands-on activities, peer tutoring, discussion, experimentation, learning centers, debates, role-playing, drill and practice) that are adapted to the learning styles of the students.
- **Evaluation/assessment techniques:** Evaluation/assessment techniques are the procedures used to measure the stated instructional objectives, including observations, portfolios, projects, demonstrations, reports, and oral and written tests. Caution should be used to avoid a boilerplate approach that replicates identical techniques across all grades. The assessments must be applicable, specific, and appropriate to the grade and the content.
- **Standards alignment:** aligning with local or state instructional standards to ensure continuity for students entering or leaving the school while maintaining connectivity to the instructional context in which the school functions. While most Christian schools are not mandated to follow state or local frameworks, some alignment, or at the very least some reference to them, is beneficial.

** Schools going through the initial accreditation process will only be required to have a complete curriculum guide/map for the core instructional areas (section A & B above). Core instructional areas are defined as Bible, language arts (reading, English, literature, grammar, and composition), mathematics, science, and social studies or history. Schools going through the renewal accreditation process will be expected to have a complete curriculum guide/map for all instructional areas.*

CURRICULUM MAPPING

With the development of curriculum mapping as a documentation strategy, a well-produced instructional map—whether hard copy, electronic, or Web-based—can satisfy most of the required elements listed above. Care must be taken to ensure that a school’s curriculum maps contain the essential elements required for accreditation and that they provide the documentation of biblical integrative components of the school’s programs.

An effective curriculum map will allow for the overview of subject content, objectives or outcomes, resources,

and alignment with school-defined or state frameworks while spreading that content over the time frame of the instructional year or unit, depending on the depth of the mapping content. Time must still be given to developing meaningful philosophy statements, biblical integrative elements, and selection of the key content by the faculty. Maps will not and should not replace faculty lesson plans, but maps could be foundational to the generation of lesson plans.

When an electronic curriculum database is used, the components may look slightly different. For example, the scope and sequence may not be a static document but instead would be a matrix that is created dynamically from a query/sort the administrator assembles for a specific purpose or level. The educational philosophy may not be included in the database but may be found in another document such as the course descriptions, which may be available on the website for parents.

Essential to any curriculum document is its usability by the faculty and effectiveness as a foundational device to guide instruction and evaluate its learning impact. A well-constructed map can accomplish this task and meet the requirements above, but it will take more preplanning, particularly if a Web-based system is utilized. It is recommended (not required) that schools use curriculum mapping software for curriculum documentation because of the significant enhancement this technology brings to the school’s ongoing curriculum development review and analysis.

APPENDIX I: POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUALS AND HANDBOOKS

The policy manuals and handbooks (governing body, administrative, faculty/staff, and student/parent) of the school should contain the establishing documents for the organization (articles of incorporation/bylaws) and include a comprehensive list of all policies that guide the governing body in its governance role (standing policies) and the administration in its management role (regulations and procedures) of the school. These manuals should be written and codified so that they are practical documents.

1. Governing Body Policy Manual

Standing policies are the “one voice” of the governing body, and they should be kept in one organized policy manual within a meaningful framework. These policies 1) define the ends (results/outcomes) of the organization, 2) set parameters/limitations to guide staff/volunteer groups in fulfilling their activities toward meeting the desired ends, 3) describe governing body/administrator/staff relationships, and 4) define the governing body’s own structure and process.

Below is a list of the types of policies that would be included in the governing body policy manual (the list is not meant to be exhaustive but only to serve as a guide):

- Statements of mission and purpose, Christian school philosophy statement
- School’s relationship to its sponsoring organization
- Hiring of the head of school
- Member nomination and selection process, qualifications of governing body members
- Church membership quorum and voting procedures
- Governing body/administrator relationship, duties and responsibilities of the governing body
- Governing body committees/organization and removal of governing body members
- Executive sessions
- Conflict of interest policies

2. Administrative Regulations and Procedures Manual

Administrative regulations and procedures establish the operational guidelines and responsibilities for the school’s executive leadership. In practice, they become the means by which the ends policies of the governing body are implemented in the day-to-day operation of the school. Administrative regulations and procedures should be organized by category into one document

within a meaningful framework.

Following is a list of suggested categories and types of regulations and procedures that should be included in the various manuals (the list is not meant to be exhaustive but only to serve as a guide):

Financial Regulations and Procedures

- Establishing documents (articles of incorporation/bylaws)
- Fund-raising policy, solicitation, and acceptance of gifts
- Budgetary process and timeline audits
- Financial aid program registration/application fee
- Tuition policy, tuition discounts
- Payroll salary schedule
- Signatures on checks/accounts
- Delinquent accounts

Human Resources Regulations and Procedures

- Nondiscriminatory hiring policy, spiritual qualifications for employment
- Professional qualifications for employment, teacher contracts
- Professional qualifications for early education staff
- Guidelines for supervision of staff (part-time, full-time, hourly)
- Family and Medical Leave Act policy, medical/liability insurance
- Corrective/termination procedures, grievance procedure
- Hiring of relatives/spouses, teacher/support staff evaluations
- Staff dress code, overtime/compensatory time
- Jury duty policy, service recognitions
- At-will employer statement, discrimination/sexual harassment policy
- ADA policy

3. Instructional Program Regulations and Procedures (Faculty/Staff Handbook)

- Statements of mission and purpose, Christian school philosophy, and schoolwide expected student outcomes

APPENDIX I: POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUALS AND HANDBOOKS

- Textbook review and selection procedures
- Achievement testing
- Assessments used for all age levels
- Dishonesty in schoolwork
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Homework policy
- School calendar
- Curriculum development
- Field trips
- Grading standards
- Instructional goals and objectives
- Instructional philosophy statement
- Use of technology

Note: Some schools choose to combine administrative regulations and procedures with instructional program regulations and procedures into one policy manual, often referred to as an employee handbook.

4. Student Regulations and Procedures (Parent/Student Handbook)

- Statements of mission and purpose, Christian school philosophy statement, and schoolwide expected student outcomes
- Admissions, immunization/infectious diseases policy
- Absences/tardiness, discipline procedures and consequences
- Suspension/expulsion, student moral standards
- Dress code
- Student accident insurance
- School-age extracurricular activities
- Interscholastic athletics, visitors
- Pupil records/student files, nondiscriminatory policy
- Transportation policy for inclement weather

APPENDIX J: OVERVIEW OF CONSULTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

The ACSI accreditation program helps a school aim for, attain, and maintain the highest standards possible through a system of self-evaluation and peer evaluation. The role of the consultant is to counsel the school through the self-evaluation. Once candidate status has been granted, the role of the consultant may be thought of in two stages: supporting the school in preparing for a visit and the actual team visit.

PREPARATION

The role of the consultant during the preparation stage is vital to the entire self-evaluation process. There are three specific aspects to the preparation stage:

1. The consultant is responsible for verifying that the ACSI accreditation standards are met. The consultant does the following:

- a. Meets with the school administrator/early education director to ensure that the accreditation commitments and standards are understood
- b. Verifies that all the accreditation commitments and standards are met before scheduling a team visit

2. The consultant is responsible for guiding the school through the self-study process. The heart of the accreditation process is the self-study. REACH Standards Manual for Accreditation for EE–12 North American and International Schools contains the protocol that the school follows, and the school responses are compiled into the self-study document. The consultant does the following:

- a. Ensures that the accreditation process is understood by the school administrator/early education director
- b. Is available to give advice while the school makes plans for conducting the self-study
- c. Visits the school one or more times, as necessary, before the arrival of the visiting team
- d. Advises the school concerning its “readiness” for the team visit
- e. Sets a visitation date that is agreeable

3. The consultant is responsible for counseling the school in preparation for the visit. The consultant does the following to assist the school in finalizing details:

- a. Ensures that the school submits the self-study and makes evidences available for electronic access to

each member of the visiting committee six weeks before the date of the visit

- b. Ensures that the school finalizes the arrangements for the lodging, food, transportation, and meeting room for the visiting team; all these expenses are the school’s responsibility
- c. Ensures that the school secures the supplementary data noted at the end of each self-study section (e.g., curriculum guides/plans, governing body policy manual, faculty handbook)

VISITATION

Normally, the consultant becomes the chairperson for the visit, and he or she is responsible for organizing and leading the visiting team. The visiting team provides objective verification of the self-study information, analysis, and conclusions reached by the school.

See the *ACSI Accreditation Checklist for Chairs in the Chair and Team Member Handbook*.

1. The chairperson does the following for the visiting team members:

- a. Ensures team expenses are reimbursed by the school
- b. Reminds the team members of the need to keep information and their report confidential

2. The chairperson does the following for the ACSI regional and global accreditation commission:

- a. Edits the final report, which includes the team’s recommendation indicating whether accreditation should be granted
- b. Sends the completed report to the ACSI regional office, where it is reviewed at the next scheduled meeting of the ACSI regional accreditation commission or at the next ACSI Commission on Accreditation meeting. Following this meeting, the school is informed of its accreditation status, and it receives a copy of the final report.

APPENDIX K: GOVERNANCE/STRUCTURAL LEVELS FOR ACSI ACCREDITATION

1. ACSI regional office (accreditation process begins here— application, candidacy, monitoring, timelines, teams, questions, etc.)
2. ACSI regional accreditation commission (final decisions on accreditation status and length of terms, monitoring issues when appropriate)
3. ACSI Office of Academic Services (direct oversight and development of the accreditation process and procedures, oversight of appeals and grievances)
4. ACSI Commission on Accreditation (final authority in approval of process and policy)

APPENDIX L: THE EXCEPTIONS PROCESS

In cases in which a school, because of an unusual circumstance or situation, cannot meet the compliance level of a standard or critical indicator, it may appeal to the ACSI regional office and commission for an exception. The regional office and commission have guidelines and criteria to follow in determining whether an exception may be granted. If a requested exception is not covered in the ACSI guidelines for the granting of an exception, it must be forwarded to the ACSI Office of Academic Services for a decision. In most cases, exceptions are conditional and they require a school to meet the compliance level over a set period of time.

For an exception to be considered, there must be significant evidence that the exception is clearly warranted and that the strengths of the school in other standards areas will make it significantly clear that an exception in the one area should be granted.

- Exceptions to one or more indicators or compliance with a standard should be requested at the time of candidacy.
- Permanent and/or Temporary Faculty Waivers can be used for up to 10% FTE of the faculty. If a school needs to exceed the 10% limit, they may request an exception to Indicator 4.6 from their ACSI regional office. See *Administrator Handbook* for explanation of each kind of waiver.
- The request must be presented in writing, with supporting documentation, well in advance of a planned accreditation visit to the school. Regional commissions meet twice a year, and commissioners assist the regional office in considering any request for an exception.
- Any exception request that is not covered in the accreditation guidelines for regional offices and commissions must be forwarded to the Office of

Academic Services at ACSI Headquarters. At times, these requests require the ACSI Commission on Accreditation to make the decision.

- A school has the right to appeal the decision of a regional commission in regard to an exception by addressing it to the Office of Academic Services at ACSI Headquarters.

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GLOSSARY

A

accreditation The status granted to a school after standards are met, a self-study has been written, a visiting committee has verified the self-study, and the commission has approved the school for accreditation. Accreditation is granted for five years or a period commensurate with that of another agency in a joint accreditation.

achievement testing A standardized testing program typically used annually to measure student achievement, or how well the students perform when compared with a national sample of similar students. Test results assist the school in measuring its effectiveness and give parents additional information about their children's performance.

ACSI Commission on Accreditation The nine-member commission is appointed by the ACSI Board of Directors, and it reports to them. It is made up of three board members and six members elected from the various ACSI regional accreditation commissions. The commission sets accreditation policy, serves as the global schools commission, and hears and adjudicates appeals from the regional commissions.

annual report A report that provides the school and ACSI with a yearly evaluation of how well the school is maintaining the ACSI accreditation standards.

annual statement of financial practices A statement that consists principally of inquiries of personnel and analytical procedures applied to financial data. It is substantially smaller in scope than an audit and is in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

assessment (early education) Assessment utilizing formative strategies that include a variety of observations, collections of work samples that exhibit growth and development milestones, and snapshots of children's activities (audio recording, video recording, and photographs). Summative assessment would be in the form of school readiness screening.

assessment (elementary and secondary) Methods of evaluating student performance and attainment—the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs (formative, summative, objective, subjective, formal, informal, etc.).

authentic assessment A form of assessment which requires students to complete projects or perform skills which are tied to real-world tasks. Typically, students are graded with rubrics for the evaluation of these tasks rather than pencil and paper assessments.

B

biblical integration The weaving of God's truth—in precept, principle, and practice—into teaching and learning in such a way that a unified, God-centered view of life is presented.

C

candidate status The status a school is placed in when it is deemed able to complete the accreditation process in a three-year maximum time frame. Candidate status is effective for three full school years.

career guidance Advice and assistance provided to students who are encouraged to examine appropriate career possibilities. Literature and other opportunities for learning about various careers are made available to students.

certification The status given to teachers who meet specified academic requirements for an ACSI teaching/administration credential.

child guidance The entirety of discipline strategies and techniques employed by an early childhood educator to guide a child toward self-control of attitudes and actions.

code of ethics An identified set of standards that each individual commits to upholding in his or her role (see *ethical guidelines*).

college selection assistance Efforts made to provide literature and exposure to various colleges/universities, with an emphasis on Christian institutions.

constituents A person or group of individuals who have an interest, are involved, and/or are affected by the accomplishment of the mission/vision (e.g., community, business owners, faculty, staff, students, parents, etc.).

consultant The person who serves first Office of Academic Services during the self-study process, including final preparation for the team visit, and then normally as chairperson of the visiting committee.

continuous improvement A consistent effort to improve the school's processes, procedures, and practices that focus on improved teaching, student achievement, and learning.

continuous school improvement plan (CSIP) A school's annualized plan for instructional and programmatic goals; strategies for reaching these goals; and assessment, timeline, personnel, resources, analysis, and reporting procedures to determine whether the goals have been achieved.

core instructional areas Bible, language arts (reading, English, literature, grammar, and composition), mathematics, science, and social studies or history.

core values A set of principles that will guide the practice of the school in fulfilling its mission (see *guiding principles*).

counseling Service to parents, students, or faculty members who are in need of advice or assistance with spiritual, emotional, social, or academic problems.

GLOSSARY

curriculum The planned instructional program to be delivered to the students. It is not a textbook series.

curriculum guide A description of what is taught throughout the school, and as such it 1) describes the school's instructional program, 2) helps to ensure continuity between grade levels and subject areas, and 3) provides a basis for evaluation of the school's instructional program.

curriculum guide/map introduction The introduction to the curriculum guide/plan which includes the subject or grade level that the curriculum guide/plan is designed for, an overview of the school's approach to the subject, and any suggestions that might help those using the guide.

D

digital citizenship Using technology in safe, effective, discerning, and responsible ways that affect student learning and the community at large.

E

early education Both the care and the education of children before and/or during kindergarten.

equitable All students have the same opportunity to meet the learning objectives.

ethical guidelines An identified set of standards that each individual commits to upholding in his or her role (see *code of ethics*).

evaluation The process used to measure the stated instructional objectives (e.g., observation, oral or written tests).

exempt Those programs or classrooms that are exempt from state regulatory inspections on the basis of provisions within the childcare licensing code.

expected student outcomes What the school intentionally targets for all students to know, believe, understand, prefer, and be able to do in academic and non-academic areas after their tenure in the school. Outcomes are based in the philosophy of the school as well as its statements of mission and vision and then personalized to the lives of the students.

executive leadership A person or group of persons having administrative or supervisory authority in an organization.

F

fidelity Assessments which are administered with the same degree of accuracy/exactness every time.

financial review A specific procedure conducted by an external CPA in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). It is less thorough and less complete than an audit. A review or an audit is recommended every year, but is required at the time of initial, as well as renewal of, accreditation.

G

governing body A group of elected or appointed individuals who come together to act as one for the purpose of establishing policies that will enable an organization to achieve its established desirable ends and to avoid results it considers unacceptable. These individuals are "trustees" who have authority when sitting as members of the governing body.

guiding principles/statements A set of principles that will guide the practice of the school in fulfilling its mission (see *core values*).

H

head of school The chief administrator. Titles for that role vary significantly from school to school (e.g., principal, administrator, headmaster, head of school, director, president, superintendent).

I

indicators Descriptions of exemplary practices, processes, and procedures that are evident in educational programs that are highly effective in meeting the standards of accreditation.

information resources The print and digital resources that are accessible on-site or digitally to support the instructional program.

instructional goals The general objectives of large blocks of instruction such as yearlong or semester courses. Instructional goals should reflect the rationale, both biblical and educational, for the inclusion of the subject as part of the school's curriculum.

instructional methods The instructional techniques that a teacher uses (e.g., hands-on activities, peer tutoring, discussion, experimentation, learning centers, debates, role-play, drill and practice) and adapts to the learning styles of the students.

instructional objectives Statements that describe the skills or concepts the student has attained when instruction in a particular subject, grade, unit, or lesson is completed.

L

license exempt Those programs or classrooms that are exempt from state regulatory inspections on the basis of provisions within the childcare licensing code.

M

media literacy A collection of competencies that enable people to analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a wide variety of media modes, genres, and formats.

midterm report The report at the midterm of accreditation that holds the school accountable for working on the recommendations from the self-study and the visiting committee report.

GLOSSARY

mission The objective that a school seeks to accomplish in order to fulfill its vision.

O

oral report An exit report given by the chairperson of the visiting committee to the school's administrator and others who are invited to the meeting by the school. Significant recommendations and commendations are shared with the school along with the team recommendation concerning accreditation which will be sent to the regional accreditation commission.

P

philosophy The system of thought that will guide the school.

philosophy of teaching and learning The philosophy that articulates the program's beliefs about how children learn and how they should be instructed, guided, and assessed. The statement determines the instructional methods and classroom practices deemed appropriate in light of the program's view of the nature and needs of children.

precollege admissions testing Registration information and practice materials for precollege tests such as the ACT and SAT given to students. Pretests, usually given in grades 10 and 11, prepare students for the types of questions they will encounter and the degree of content knowledge these tests will require.

profile A written snapshot of the school, as described in Appendix G.

R

referral A procedure by which a counselor suggests school or community resources to assist a parent or a student who has learning, emotional, physical, or other problems.

regional accreditation commission The commission elected by the ACSI-accredited schools in each region. The commission meets, usually twice a year, to review and monitor the accreditation activity in the region and to make decisions on school accreditation.

resources The required and supplemental instructional materials that are used in the instructional program and that are identified in the curriculum guides/plans.

rubric An assessment tool to assist schools in measuring their level of compliance with the standards of accreditation.

S

scaffold To support a child's learning by asking questions, connecting new information to existing knowledge, providing encouragement for attempting something new, or providing assistance to move understanding to the next level.

school readiness The culmination of the preschooler's preparation for formal schooling as evidenced in age-

appropriate maturation of social skills, intellectual inquiry and achievement, emotional development, physical growth and coordination, and spiritual training.

scope and sequence Indicates the breadth of the content to be taught and the order in which it will be taught.

self-study The document produced by the steering committee and the various subcommittees of the school as they answer the questions in the evaluative criteria. Subcommittees are composed of administrators, board members, and faculty, and at times parents and students. This document is a collaborative effort of the school groups. It must represent the combined input, analysis, and consensus of all those involved.

spiritual formation The broad area of teaching and nurturing of students in their spiritual development, including their understanding that all truth is God's truth, they are created in the image of God, they must confront the issue of sin and redemption, they can know God as revealed in Christ and made present in the Holy Spirit, and they have been called to become a disciple of Jesus and become more like Him. In addition, the school's role in spiritual formation is to help students develop a biblical worldview as they are taught and nurtured intellectually, socially, and physically through every planned learning activity.

stakeholder(s) A person or group of individuals who have direct interest, involvement, or investment in the realization of the mission/vision (e.g., parents, community, faculty, staff, and donors).

standards The eight established qualitative conditions for school accreditation.

steering committee A group of individuals at the school that is responsible for the development and completion of the self-study. The steering committee works with each of the section subcommittees to advise them and to hold them accountable for completing the tasks and putting quality effort into the process.

subcommittee A group of persons at the school that is responsible for one section of the self-study. The subcommittee reports to the steering committee.

T

target groups The people whom the school accepts the responsibility to serve.

team visit A visit to the school by fellow educators to validate the self-study, assess the accuracy and completeness of the report, and construct a report on their visit. The report is based on each section of the self-study. This visit generally lasts three or four days.

GLOSSARY

V

viable A school that possesses multiple students in each grade level that is offered by the school, qualified faculty members, sufficient instructional resources, finances, facilities, and support that gives every indication that it will, under normal circumstances, continue to exist as a school.

vision A description of what the (school, department, division, program) will look like in the future. Alternatively, a description of a preferred future.

visiting team The team of educators from outside the school who visit it in order to validate the self-study, assess the accuracy and completeness of the report, and construct a report on their visit. The visiting team evaluates the school according to the ACSI accreditation standards and policies.

visiting team report A report written by the visiting team that is sent to an ACSI regional accreditation commission or the ACSI Commission on Accreditation for international schools with a recommendation about the school's accreditation. ACSI accreditation commissions are not bound by the recommendation. The final report is given to the school.





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Additional Resources

Support documents for REACH may be found on the ACSI website
(<https://www.acsi.org/schoolaccreditationdocuments>).

