



REACH

Accreditation Chair and Team Member Handbook
for EE–12 North American and International Schools

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

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Foreword

The word *ministry* has several facets; hence, we tend to use it in several ways. Its Latin root is the same as *minute* or *minor*. The grand idea of ministry is something done to the glory of God! As you contemplate your service as a team member or chairperson, you should see it as ministry. You are coming alongside a sister organization in the wonderful worldwide community of Christian schools to provide objective insights to assist that school on its journey toward excellence. In God's economy, when we do something in the spirit of ministry there is a ripple of blessing that moves inward as it moves outward. When we graciously serve others, we in turn receive blessing. (See 2 Corinthians chapters 4, 5, 6.)

As fellow Christian school educators we are passionate about teaching and learning. Accreditation visits allow us to experience the reality that there are a variety of ways to do Christian schooling well, so when we visit a school we learn from the school as it learns from us. This is the essence of peer review, which is the heart of accreditation. You can think of it in the same way we think about discipleship and mentoring.

Crucial to a quality visit is being prepared to minister to the school. An effective chairperson prepares her or his own spirit so that in turn the team is well prepared to serve the school. The relational mix within the team is cultivated by the chairperson, and the team cultivates a unified and supportive attitude toward each other and the school. The team members bring expertise and competence to the process elements of accreditation by understanding the cultural context of the school, its profile and history, and where it is in its development.

Your willing service will be a manifold blessing to a sister school. You will experience professional growth as you invest your time and talent in the worthy work of accreditation. Accreditation incites and invigorates a school and its people to move beyond the present to increased effectiveness. Christian schools bear the name that is excellent in all the earth (Psalm 8:9), and accreditation encourages them to honor that name in all that they do.



Erin Wilcox EdD
Executive Director, ACSI Commission on Accreditation

An Accreditation Overview

Accreditation is the process in which schools are reviewed for their compliance with educational standards of quality and, with the accrediting agency, agree on a plan for ongoing school improvement. In Christian schools these standards penetrate the mission and philosophy of the school. Visiting team members bring an understanding of the accreditation standards and culturally competent insights to the school under review.

The highest status that ACSI can grant to a member school is that of being accredited. Your work as a chairperson or team member is critical in providing a report that is of such quality that the commission can make a sound decision about the granting of accreditation. In addition, the report is a tool for the school and its stakeholders to utilize in planning for its future. ACSI accreditation should mean the school is actively seeking to be a God-honoring educational institution in every aspect of its educational program and operations. Your work as a chairperson or visiting team member will assist them in that pursuit.

The work of the team members, individually and corporately, is to thoroughly read the self-study from the school and validate both the process used to develop it and the insights and conclusions it reached. The goal is to provide additional objective insights for the school which are expressed in commendations and recommendations in the team report.

ACSI partners with many secular accreditation agencies as a means to provide the recognition and credibility schools often need to serve their students as they move out of school and into life. In almost all of these partnerships, the REACH Accreditation Protocol is recognized for its quality and, therefore, serves as the lead protocol and basis for the school's accreditation by both groups.

ACSI has similarity in its processes to many of the other accreditation agencies. It verifies and validates a school is meeting the standards for accreditation. It uses the process of "peer-review" as colleagues from other schools evaluate the various aspects of the school. It also provides insight into what is commendable and what is recommended for improvement. The team develops a report which is forwarded to a regional commission for review. The commission then makes a decision about whether the school should be accredited.

ACSI differs from secular accreditation groups by ensuring that the Christian mission and ethos of the school is viewed and evaluated as integral to all aspects of accreditation. The school is to be as focused on its discipleship, character, and faith development as it is with its academic rigor and achievement. The team is fully expected to honor the clearly biblical values of testimony, integrity, collaboration, and humility. In addition each team member must sign a code of ethics to honor each of these qualities and ensure their agreement for professionalism, confidentiality, and the decision making process.

The ACSI Commission on Accreditation takes seriously their responsibility to provide schools with a program of recognition that is consistent with our Christian faith, serves schools as responsible stewards, and gives honor to those who should be honored.

Serving as an Accreditation Team Member

Thank you for your willingness to serve on an ACSI school accreditation team! As a team member, you are one of a select group of educators representing ACSI with the responsibility to conduct a thorough site evaluation of the school and make an accreditation term and status recommendation to the ACSI Regional Commission. The school's stakeholders have spent hours conducting a self-study and developing a school improvement plan focused on improving student learning and the school's ability to stimulate that improvement. The visiting accreditation team serves as evaluators and peers with the goal of leaving the school poised to better achieve its mission, vision, core values, and objectives.

Outcomes of a Team Visit:

- To verify that the self-study accurately reflects the school's program—its strengths as well as its areas for improvement
- To examine the school's plan for addressing its identified areas for growth
- To commend the school in those areas in which it excels
- To make recommendations for improvement within the instructional, operational, and spiritual programs of the school and identify those areas that the school must address before it can be accredited, or what it must do before it can be reaccredited
- To make a recommendation via a written report to the Regional Accreditation Commission relative to the school's being accredited and the number of years for which the school should be accredited
- To serve as an encouragement to fellow Christian educators

Qualifications for an Accreditation Consultant, Chair, or Team Member:

- A current or retired Christian school educator (For stand alone early education programs, a chairperson must have experience teaching in or directing a Christian early education program.)
- Able to be away from work/school for three and one-half days, including evening work sessions
- Able to make unbiased observations and conclusions based on evidence, documentation, observations, interviews, and other data presented
- Able to work intensively and cooperatively with other team members in meeting the expectations for the team
- Discerning about needs and expectations of the school
- Able to analyze the school's self-study and prepare work based on analysis
- Know or be willing to learn the process of accreditation
- Excellent writing and communication skills
- Ability to use a computer for writing reports
- A servant's heart with a biblical worldview
- Attended formal ACSI accreditation training
- ACSI policies state that no more than two people from the same school may serve on the same visiting team. No relative or spouse may serve on the same team; a team member may not be from the school, either past or present, being accredited.

Accreditation Checklist for Chairs

The role of chairperson is highly significant in a school's successful completion of the accreditation process. The consultant serves as the school's guiding expert throughout the months of preparation and usually becomes the chairperson who leads the team visit. The checklist below is a general guide for use in keeping track of each of the chairperson responsibilities. It is organized by timeline with the duties that typically fall within each of the noted periods.

A. When assigned as Chairperson

- ☐ Review the candidacy or previous team report for the school.
- ☐ Verify with the regional office if this is a dual accreditation
 - Establish if ACSI is the lead agency.
- ☐ Review the school's Standards and Indicators checklist.
 - Note any standards that are non-compliant.
 - Note any critical indicators that are non-compliant. Schools must have a minimum of 90% of critical indicators at the compliant or higher level in order to have a team visit scheduled.
- ☐ Develop questions for the school administrator.
 - Contact the school administrator and review questions.
 - Update on the progress and organization of the school's self-study.
- ☐ Review timeline and visit dates with school administrator.
 - Back plan from team visit dates.
- ☐ Plan a faculty and steering committee orientation visit to the school.
 - A tele-conference is optional if this is a renewal visit.
- ☐ If dual accreditation, identify which supplements may be needed.
 - Clarify if team member(s) from another association will be on the team.
- ☐ Establish a communication update schedule with the school.

B. Four to six months before the scheduled visit

- ☐ Confirm the visit dates and team members with the regional office.
- ☐ Obtain team member application forms from regional office.
- ☐ Meeting or video conference with the school administrator.
 - Review team member names with school.
 - Contact the regional office if the school does not approve the list.
 - Discuss status of any standard or critical indicator issues.
 - Notify the regional office if there are areas of non-compliance.

- ☐ Meet or conduct video conference with steering committee.
 - Review status of self-study report and evidences.
 - Request preliminary copy of self-study.
 - Agree on how evidences are made electronically available to team.
 - Review visit dates and general schedule.
 - Establish the date for the self-study to be completed and submitted.
- ☐ Provide a written status report to the regional office, indicating one of the following statements:
 - The school is well prepared for the visit as scheduled.
 - The school may not be prepared for the visit as scheduled.
 - The school will not be prepared for the visit as scheduled.
- ☐ Welcome and provide school information to the team members.
 - Confirm with team members their reporting assignment(s).
- ☐ Make contact with team member(s) from other association if required by the dual accrediting agency.

C. Three months before the scheduled visit

- ☐ Conduct consulting visit or video conference with the school.
 - Review of the online access to the self-study, evidences, and data.
 - Ensure that the self-study, evidences, and data are virtually complete.
 - Review deadline for submission to chair and team.
 - Review team logistics needs.
 - Accommodations during visit with meeting room
 - School accreditation workroom for team
 - Internet, projector, supplies, privacy, etc.
 - Confirm with the regional office that the school is prepared for the visit.
- ☐ Communication with the visiting team.
 - Review school timeline and preliminary visit schedule.
 - Confirm travel plans for each team member
 - Review the *Values and Ethics Statement* with the team
 - Provide the template for the report
 - Provide sample of commendations and recommendations

D. Two months before the scheduled visit

- ☐ Communicate with the school leadership and steering committee.
 - Review the status of the self-study.
 - Confirm that all standards and critical indicators are in compliance
 - Remind the school of the deadline for having the complete self-study, evidences, and data posted
 - If the deadline is missed the visit may be cancelled
 - Discuss the visiting team schedule in detail.
 - General schedule
 - Interviews
 - Group meetings
 - Observations
 - Exit meeting
 - Review the team logistics for the visit.
 - Team accommodations and meals
 - Team workroom needs
 - Team travel arrangements
 - Team travel plans and expense reimbursements
 - Communicate with the visiting team members.
 - Chair provides a draft of introductory sections of the report
 - Review of schedule and writing assignments for each member
 - Review the interview schedule for team as a group and individual members
 - Ensure that each standard writer has appropriate interviews scheduled

E. One month before the scheduled visit

- ☐ Ensure that the self-study, evidences, and data are complete and posted for team access.
 - Contact the school immediately if the self-study, evidences, and data are not posted.
 - Notify the regional office after contacting the school if the documents are not ready.
 - Discuss any last details of the visit with the school.
 - Review the final team schedule with the school.
 - Confirm the team logistics for accommodations, travel, workroom, etc.
- ☐ Communicate with the visiting team.
 - Ensure that all team members have accessed the portal and the documents.
 - Team member initial rating for each indicator for all standards.
 - Review each of the Critical Indicators.
 - Team members provide draft of assigned standards narrative.
 - Draft commendations and recommendations.
 - Review with individual team member if draft does not meet quality writing or accreditation policy.
 - Confirm final travel arrangements and other logistics.
- ☐ Plan a thorough team orientation.

F. During the visit

- ☐ Approach the visit as the most prepared member of the team.
- ☐ Conduct a tour of the school as soon as possible and review the details of the schedule.
- ☐ Be sure that campus maps and schedules are clear and understood by the team.
- ☐ Plan an organizational and orientation time (90 minutes).
 - Ethics and professional distance and demeanor for the team.
 - Validation of the school self-study, evidences, and data.
 - Provide objective insights with clear concise writing.
 - Cooperate with the chair and all the team in reaching consensus.
 - Emphasis on following the schedule and being on time for all meetings.
- ☐ Review the team report document.
 - Follow the report template without variation.
 - Set daily goals for the team.
 - Provide extra support to team members as needed.
 - Establish a daily debrief session.
 - Manage the team for effectiveness and efficiency.
 - Review goal accomplishments, issues, and concerns daily.
- ☐ Conduct a team review of each report section as it is completed, including the *Team Indicator Ratings Spreadsheet*.
- ☐ Gather daily opinions of the team members regarding achieving accreditation.

Concluding activities of the visit

- ☐ Review and edit, as a team, all sections of the report.
- ☐ Engage the team in coming to consensus on major commendations and recommendations, and recommendation to the commission.
 - Establish a final rating for each of the indicators using the *Team Indicator Ratings Spreadsheet* to share with the school, if so desired by the school.
 - Ensure that major recommendations are standards based.
 - Include a minority report if necessary.
- ☐ Complete supplementary documents needed by partner organization.
- ☐ Use the appropriate ballot(s) for team recommendation.
 - Team members sign the ballot(s).
- ☐ Prepare an exit report using the template.
 - Briefly review major commendations and recommendations.
 - Note the team accreditation recommendation to the commission.
 - Remind the school that the commission makes the final decision on accreditation.
 - School invites attendees to the exit report meeting.

- ☐ Meet with the school administrator/leadership and review the team's findings.
 - Allow questions and input for consideration.
- ☐ Conduct, with the team, an exit report meeting with school staff and guests.
 - Present brief exit report using the provided template.
 - Remind the attendees that there will not be discussion or questions about the report.
 - Clarify that the visiting team is a recommending group not decision making.

Concluding team meeting

- ☐ Remind team that report and recommendation is confidential.
- ☐ Remind team they will be asked to evaluate the chair electronically.
- ☐ Distribute reimbursement checks to the team.
- ☐ Thank the team for their service.

G. Following the team visit

- ☐ Complete final editing of the report within three weeks of visit.
 - Review for clarity, proper grammar, and punctuation.
 - Review for consistency with ACSI report template and guidelines.
- ☐ Provide a copy to the school administrator and team members for review; watermark as “confidential”.
- ☐ Provide final edited report to the ACSI regional office. Regional Offices will be responsible for editing reports prior to their commission meetings.

Visiting Team Members

The purpose of a visiting team member is to:

- Verify that the school is in compliance with the standards
- Validate that the self-study is accurate, complete, and reflects the “what is” of the school
- Review data, documents, and evidences for each standard
- Review the strength statements in light of the indicators for the standards
- Develop high quality, insightful statements of commendations and recommendations for each standard
- Develop major commendations and recommendations
- Assess and provide insights to the school improvement plan
- Participate in developing the exit report to the school
- Evaluate the quality of the visit

While serving on the visiting team, you will be representing the Association of Christian Schools International, your own institution, and yourself. Therefore, it is important that you understand the expectations for the professional conduct of team members.

- You are a guest of the school; respect the time, effort, and expertise the school has put into their self-study.
- You have an obligation to review, observe, study, and inquire, but it is not your responsibility to tell your hosts how to do things.
- You are to determine if the school meets the standards for accreditation and to authenticate its plan for growth and improvement in student performance. Be gracious, considerate, respectful, and professional with the school and your fellow team members.
- Questions should be open-ended and give the constituents the opportunity to share how they meet the standards and about their improvement plan. Listen more than talk (James 1:19).
- Make insightful judgments without voicing personal bias or criticisms.
- Remember, you are appraising the school and its plan in terms of its own mission, beliefs, core values, and objectives and not your own ideals. The team verifies the accuracy of the self-study and observes the standards being met.
- If you have a conflict of interest with the school, discuss this with your chair prior to the visit, if possible.

Your deliberations and those of your teammates on the visiting team are to be held in confidence during and following the visit. When you leave the host school, your role and your responsibilities as a validator come to an end, but your obligation to maintain professional confidentiality remains with you as you resume your duties at your school/work. The team’s report itself is a confidential issue between the chair, the school, and the Accreditation Commission.

Draft Report

Since the report will be drafted during the visit, it is essential to bring a laptop computer. It is expected that you will do some work before arriving on site. This would include reviewing the school’s self-study, evidence, writing the initial introductory paragraph(s) for the sections you have been assigned, and drafting potential commendations and recommendations, etc.

The Work of the Visiting Team

Your visiting team chair will familiarize you with the protocol, the team’s schedule, the purposes and expected outcomes of the visit, and his or her expectations. This will usually be done at an organizational and training meeting when you first arrive. You will spend time during the visit interviewing representative groups of constituents from the school—teachers, students, administrators, parents, etc. You will also spend time observing in classrooms. Note that no more than one visit by a team member per classroom is necessary. While you want the school and faculty to see your interest, time does not permit several visits or lengthy stays. You will be asked to write a summary on one or more areas (e.g., school profile, instructional program, personnel) along with commendations and recommendations for specific sections of the report. The chair, however, is responsible for preparing and submitting the final report with the team’s input. The team will do its work during the day and potentially in the evenings.

Organizational and Logistical Functions

Your lodging as well as your meals during the visit will be arranged and paid for by the host school. The school will also reimburse you for your travel costs. Travel expenses can include mileage, tolls, plane fare, etc. All travel expenses should be discussed with the team chair prior to the visit. Please retain all receipts to submit for reimbursement. Expenses that are not reimbursable include car rental, telephone calls, and other personal costs (toiletries, snacks, etc.) while on the visit. You will be given an expense reimbursement form by the chair before the end of the visit. Normally, the school will have a reimbursement check ready before you leave the school. Professional dress is expected for the daytime, and comfortable casual clothes may be worn for evening meetings. No honorariums are to be taken.

Arrangements with Your Own Institution

In most cases, you have received this invitation because the head of your school has recommended you to serve on an accreditation team. However, it is vital that you contact the head of your school immediately upon receiving an invitation to gain approval to serve on an accreditation team and to make arrangements for your absence. Remember, serving on an accreditation visiting team is voluntary. Therefore, you will not receive any financial compensation from either ACSI or the host school. If a substitute is required during your absence, the cost of the individual will need to be covered by your school.

Changes to Your Availability to Serve on a Team

If an emergency arises that makes it an impossibility to serve on this team, notify the chair of the team and/or the ACSI regional office immediately.

Continuing Education

By serving on a visiting team, you are not only contributing your professional experience to the school and to ACSI, you are sharing in a very valuable professional development experience. ACSI offers professional CEU credit for your service. The regional office will contact you regarding your CEU.

In Conclusion

The Association of Christian Schools International greatly appreciates your willingness to further the quality of education and the process of school growth and improvement by serving on the visiting accreditation team.

Sample Team Visit

Sunday Evening

- 5:00 PM** **Check into hotel**
Hilton Garden Inn, 123-234-4567
5655 Main St. Sample, CO
- 5:30** **Tour of campus with school leadership**
Meet at middle/high school entrance, maps, rosters, keys, schedules provided
- 6:30** **Dinner at nearby restaurant**
Chili's 2 blocks N of school on North Avenue, reservations in John Smith's name
- 8:30–10:00** **Meet at hotel for initial team meeting**
Conference room each evening, with wireless, power strips & projector
Workroom is Rm 212—HS wing, ext. 212
Mary, ext. 234
Mary's cell: 822-555-1234
Tech, ext. 245

Monday

- 6:45 AM** **Meet in lobby** (breakfast provided)
- 7:15** **Whole team is introduced** to all school staff
Auditorium, main floor
- 8:00** **Observe opening of school**
Two dropoff points at main doors
- 8:30/9:30** **Parent Groups** (meet separately)
EE—Preschool
ES—Art room
MS—room 100
HS—Auditorium
- 9:45** **Begin observations in classrooms**
- 12:00 Noon** **Lunches with ES, MS, and HS students separately**
ES—Library, 11:30
MS—Art room, 11:50
HS—Library, 12:10
- 1:00 PM** **Meet with Steering Committee**
Whole team—Choir Room
- 2:00** **Continue with observations**
- 3:45** **Meet with EE, ES, MS, and HS teachers**
without administrators
ES—Art room
MS—Room 100
HS—Auditorium
- 4:45** **Continue teamwork**
- 6:30** **Dinner reception with school board**
Whole team—Library (catered)
- 8:00** **Team work on report** at hotel conference rm.

Tuesday

- 7:30 AM** **Meet in lobby**, leave for school
- 8:00** **Observe opening of school**, conduct interviews
- 8:30** **Final observations/artifact collection** and review
- 9:00** **Meet with superintendent**—small group, superintendent's office
- 10:00** **Meet with principals/director** in small groups—respective offices
- 11:00** **Meet with support staff** or complete interviews as needed (see chart)
- 12:00 Noon** **Lunch at school** (order from menu)
- 1:00 PM** **Final observations** or interviews (as needed)
- 2:00** **Team meeting** in workroom
- 3:45–4:30** **Teachers/staff meetings by Standards**
Organize in groups such as 1 and 2 together
- 5:45** **Team Dinner** BarBQ Bill's restaurant, next to hotel, reservation for John Smith
- After Dinner** **Team work** at hotel conference room

Wednesday

- 7:30** **Check out** of hotel, leave for school
- 8:00** **Team meets for report work**, admin details
- 11:30** **Working lunch** for team, on campus
- 12:00** **Initial team report finalized**
- 12:30** **Team chair/Ass't Chair review draft** of report w/school leadership—Supt. office
- 1:30** **Final revisions to team report**, team balloting for accreditation term, prepare group presentation
- 1:30** **Team edits report**
- 3:45** **Visiting committee reads report highlights** to whole school—Auditorium (projector supplied)
- 4:30** **Team departs** (airport and driving)

The Team Report

The team report is a succinct, insightful, and focused document designed to assist a school in its commitment to ongoing school improvement. It identifies and comments on how the school is fulfilling its required commitment to the standards as well as how it has implemented and will implement a systematic, continuous school improvement plan. The team uses the school's self-study to identify strengths and areas for improvement to inform their report writing. They will also use information gleaned during the on-site visit through interviews and observation. For each standard section of the report, the team will provide commendations and recommendations and indicate compliance with the Standard. Major recommendations must be addressed each year in the school's annual accreditation report.

Outline of Team Report

A. Introduction to the Visiting Team Report

- a. Intro to the Visit (This section is a narrative introduction to the Visiting Team Report. It contains comments and pertinent information about the visit that helps the reader understand any special considerations or conditions that may have existed.)
- b. Significant changes (For renewal visits only. This section describes any significant changes the school has experienced and how they have dealt with those. Of special note would be the impact of these on the accreditation standards or the school's ability to accomplish their continuous school improvement plan.)
- c. Response to major recommendations (For renewal visits only. This is a list of the school's major recommendations from the previous accreditation visit and the team's assessment on whether these have been completed or should continue to be addressed in the current cycle of accreditation.)
- d. Summary statement of compliance to critical indicators (In this section the visiting team comments on the critical indicators which were not at the compliance level or higher. There must be a major recommendation for each of these critical indicators.)

B. School Profile Review

- a. Historical overview (This section is a summary of the founding of the school, as well as the original mission. Also included are any significant developments, accreditation history, awards/recognition, and challenges the school has faced.)
- b. Mission, vision, and future goals (This portion includes the school's mission, vision, and goals for the future.)
- c. Demographic portrait (This section summarizes the demographic portrait provided by the school and what implications that information might have for future growth or accomplishments of expected student outcomes.)
- d. Achievement of expected student outcomes (In this section, the team includes the accomplishments of the students in each area of expected student outcomes: academic, spiritual, physical, emotional. Information should present summary data, analysis, and an explanation of how they are used in setting school improvement goals.)

C. Standards Adherence Assessment for Each Standard

- a. Indicator compliance ratings
- b. Standard overview narratives. (The following narrative provides an overview of "what is" in relation to this standard. The team refers to evidence or examples regarding the school's compliance to the standard in their comments.)
Note for Standard 5: While the team is free to address any subject area they feel needs to be addressed as either exemplary or needing attention, they do not have to cover each subject area in the narrative paragraph.
 1. Evidences utilized to support "meeting the standard"
- c. Commendations and recommendations
 1. Reference team rating on indicators from the *Team Ratings Spreadsheet*
 2. Quality of data/documentation evidences
 3. Identified strengths
 4. Peer review insights
- d. Adherence to the Standard
 1. Annotate level of adherence
 2. If partial or noncompliant, an additional statement is necessary on how the school will be able to achieve compliance.

D. Major Commendations (Standards-Related)

E. Major Recommendations (Standards-Related)

F. Final Narratives

- a. Summary of the Self-Study Process (The following is a description of the school's self-study report, documentation, evidences, organization, use of surveys, and assessments.)
- b. Conclusion Summary (The following section is a summary of the school's general compliance with the standards. It should also address major themes and the school's consistency of its mission and practice.)

G. Statement of Appreciation to the School

- a. Appreciation for school and those who serve
- b. Appreciation for school's involvement in accreditation
- c. Appreciation for hospitality and collegiality

H. Signatures Page for Report Completion

NOTE—A signed ballot with the recommended status and term of accreditation is prepared separately from the team report and is not provided to the school.

Observations and Interviews

Classroom Observations:

The purpose for the visiting team to observe in classrooms is to gain an understanding of what the teaching and learning process is like at the school.

Observations should focus on the following areas:

- Student Engagement/Instructional Practice
- Instructional Resources/Technology
- Support for Learning
- Classroom Management
- Teacher/Student Relationships
- Biblical Integration
- Assessment Strategies

It is the observer's goal to enter and leave the classroom without affecting what is going on in the class. Hopefully, the teacher has provided a chair with the lesson plan available near the door.

- a. Please refrain from asking questions to students or teachers. There may be one or two clarifying questions that are absolutely essential to understanding what is going on, but the focus of an observation is to observe what is happening during a regular class period.
- b. Feel free to walk around the room to observe students doing individual or small group work if it is not disruptive.
- c. Note any highlights or glaring deficiencies, from any standard, on the observation form. These will give evidence for strengths and weaknesses in departments or levels if noted in multiple classrooms and may even lead to major commendations or recommendations.

Interviews/Focus Groups:

Interviews are primarily used to confirm what has been noted in the self-study and supporting evidence and then to fill in missing or unclear information to help answer questions raised by the information gathered.

Interviews usually take place for the following groups:

- Faculty (EE, ES, MS, and HS) although it may be in a different configuration (without administrators)
- Standard (one for each standard or two standards together if there is overlap of committee members)
- Individuals—one-on-one or small groups as needed (the administrators, guidance counselors, athletic directors and support staff such as nurse, registrar, transportation director, and admissions each need to be interviewed.)
- Noninstructional Staff—the group interview usually includes teacher aides, administrative assistants, etc.

- Parents—EE, ES, MS, HS; these may be combined differently
- Students—ES, MS, HS; these may be combined differently
- Board—If this meeting takes place at a dinner, often 1–2 members of the team are seated with 1–2 members of the board. It is helpful for everyone to have the same set of questions. Administrators are not in attendance.

Each time a person or interviewer starts to talk with an individual or group of people, it is important to do the following (assuming it hasn't been done before with this particular group):

1. Introduce yourself, and let the person/group know what standard(s) you are working on.
2. Put the individual/group at ease letting them know that there are not any "right answers." It is important for them to explain how things really are. Explain that it is the job of the team to ask questions until it addresses the "growing edge" or the point at which they might feel they have room to grow. The overall purpose of the accreditation team is to identify strengths and areas that need to be improved; that is what makes a valuable report for the school.
3. Generally, each interviewer should ask the interviewee the following:
 - a. How long have you been involved at the school and in what capacities?
 - b. In general, what are some of the outstanding strengths of the school?
 - c. What would you consider areas most in need of improvement?
 - d. What are a couple of the greatest challenges facing the school in the next year or two?

For those involved in a specific standard subcommittee:

- a. What sections did you work on? How did you contribute to the completion of that section of the report?
 - b. Ask b, c, and d from above.
 - c. What documents or evidence did you analyze that led you to those conclusions?
 - d. Other than these specific strengths and weaknesses, was there anything else about this area that you found interesting or helpful to you as a _____ (whatever their position is)?
4. Assure staff members that comments will not be attributed to individuals. They may feel more free to contribute if they know they will not be quoted.

5. Do not give the impression that you are rushed. Listening to the teachers and staff is important. They need to know they can trust you with the information they are about to share.
6. If staff members ask questions that cannot be answered by the interviewer, remind them of the team's purpose. Be careful not to be drawn into criticizing or prescribing what should be done at their school to fix some of their problems. Keep answers from the visiting team short as the focus of this time should be allowing school staff to answer questions.
7. As you ask your questions, REMEMBER:
 - a. The best questions are open-ended and non-threatening. It is best not to ask Yes/No questions.
 - b. If the answer you get isn't very informative, ask a follow-up question such as "Tell me more about how that works here." "Could you give me an example of that in your classroom?" or "How often does that occur?"
 - c. Make sure you note the nonverbal responses as well as what is said. If you note confusion or some nonverbal cues going around the room (in a group), then stop and ask another question to discover more about what isn't being said.
 - d. Do not let two or three vocal people dominate a group conversation. Sometimes it is helpful to ask for a show of hands after you have asked a question. You may do that by saying, "How many of you do _____ on a regular basis?" Then choose someone and ask for more details or an example. It will help others begin talking.
 - e. It is always good to work with a partner so that one of you can ask the questions and listen actively while the other one takes notes.
 - f. Be thoughtful concerning starting and ending on time.
8. During most visits, you will have an opportunity to meet with the group that worked on an individual standard. When you prepare for those meetings, you will need to develop additional specific questions about information you are missing, their conclusions, or certain items unclear from the evidence.
9. Focus groups can be conducted in a large group or several small groups. If your team decides to separate and interview small groups of parents or students, make sure that each interviewer has a copy of questions that all members are planning to ask.
10. Children even as young as preschoolers can be interviewed. Be sure to brainstorm with your team members as to how the questions should be worded for the age level of the children being interviewed. No matter how young the children are, it is still best to ask for descriptive words rather than yes/no answers.
11. It is important to note that some schools have a policy that anyone who spends time with their students must have a background check. Many schools are willing to accept a written statement from another ACSI school that he/she has a background check on file. Check with the school in advance to make sure you know their policy on this issue.

Appendix A—Writing Commendations and Recommendations

As the team visits classrooms, interviews the various constituents, and reviews the self-study and the evidence provided, strengths and weaknesses of the school will become evident. Each member of the team will write commendations and recommendations about the sections to which he/she is assigned. Also, commendations and recommendations may be suggested by a team member about any aspect of the school. If the school's self-study is an accurate reflection of the overall school program, there should be consistency between strengths and weaknesses noted by the school and the commendations and recommendations prepared by the visiting team.

The following explain how commendations and recommendations should be written. Examples for each are provided.

Commendations:

1. Commendations should only be written if the activity or initiative is clearly above average and has a positive impact on something that is identified in the REACH standards and indicators. In other words, schools may have unique programs, but if they are not resulting in demonstrable gains or achievements in indicators that have been identified as the indicators to evaluate, then the program should not be commended.
2. Commendations typically come from areas that either the school or team has rated with a 4. However, there are exceptions. The overall rating for an area might be a 3, but the school may have an outstanding program within that area that still deserves a commendation. A commendation would rarely be written for an area that receives an overall rating of 2 or 1. (An example might be that a school is doing an outstanding job with connecting to, involving, and surveying their alumni but the rest of their data collection for the school, home, and community is below average.)
3. Major commendations can be general statements that are a compilation of more than one area of strength. If so, they will reference more than one indicator.
4. The construction of a commendation is as follows:

Statement and Description:

A one sentence statement of fact that describes a program or initiative at the school and the result of that initiative in terms of the outcomes for students. It is followed by a brief description of what the team saw which explains why this commendation was warranted. It will include the evidence the team used in making the decision.

Example #1:

All students and faculty have access to an exceptional collection of media and information resources at the SCS campus, enhancing student research and instruction by faculty. (Indicator 5.11)

Students and faculty have access to a wide range of up-to-date materials and resources through the two on-site media centers as well as online resources, both free and subscription-based. With the use of their SCS ID card, students are also able to access nearby college library materials. Sufficient qualified personnel are retained to provide the necessary training and assistance of materials and resources. (Media center observations and

interviews with students and staff.)

Example #2:

SCS has developed a robust system of assessing its expected student outcomes and using the information gained from those assessments to improve the overall school program as well as ensuring that individual students make annual gains on the attainment of those outcomes. (Indicator 5.8, 7.8)

Through a schoolwide effort over the past five years, the faculty of SCS has developed and tracked progress of its students on the expected student outcomes by linking key assessments to its curriculum. Faculty are invested in making sure that individual students satisfactorily complete the key assessments in each grade level before moving to the next. Data from these assessments influences program improvements. (Staff and administrator interviews, Self-study Standard 5, pg. 57)

Recommendations:

1. Recommendations should only be written if the area of improvement is directly related to a standard indicator. It should be clear that if the school deals positively with the recommendation, then they would be likely to improve their score on the rubrics for that indicator. This should reduce the recommendations that would simply reflect improvements that would be "nice to have" or something that a team member would prefer.
2. Recommendations typically come from areas that either the school or team has rated with a 2 or a 1. However, just like the commendations, that isn't always the case. The overall rating for an area might be a 3 but the school may have a particular weakness or some aspect that is completely missing. (An example might be that the school's overall security plan is completely adequate but they might not be meeting state guidelines for performing fire drills.)
3. Recommendations are to be written using active verbs from the list provided. They are not to start with "continue to" or "consider." If it is clear that some action needs to be taken but it is not clear what action that is, a suitable verb may be "review" or "research." The rest of the recommendation can then direct the school to study the problem and "develop a strategy" to address the situation. Using two verbs is acceptable when one logically follows the other such as "research possible strategies and implement a plan to address the needs of the gifted students..." (This would be appropriate if the school, students, and team identified that this population was not being served by the current instructional strategies.)
4. Teams should be careful not to specify solutions to the problems they have identified. They should not say how the school will solve a particular problem by prescribing certain programs, staff, or initiatives. The focus should be on the standards and the specific descriptive wording in the rubrics that need to be met.
5. Major recommendations are generated from (a) major recommendations that were not resolved from previous accreditation visits (b) non-compliance of critical indicators (c) violations of state requirements such as safety violations,

(d) issues deemed as a standards violation, and (e) issues comprehensive enough to affect the mission/future viability of the school.

6. Typically, schools receive no more than three to four major recommendations. Exceptions are made if the school (a) did not address all the previous recommendations from the last visit or (b) receives less than a full term for accreditation.
7. The construction of a recommendation is as follows:

Statement and Description:

This is a one sentence statement that starts with an active verb (from the list) specifying what the school is supposed to do to more fully meet the standard indicator. This may include a second verb only if those two are related sequentially or the second more fully describes the first. It is followed by a brief description of what the team saw which explains why this recommendation was warranted. It will include the evidence the team used in making the decision.

Example #1:

Create a curriculum review process that details what possible factors, changes, and revisions will be considered throughout the process and outlines a regular schedule for evaluating each subject area. (Indicator 5.2)

SCS changes its curriculum in response to course evaluation comments and teacher input when items need correction in the course maps but those are not enough for a systematic curriculum review process. A thorough process requires all teachers in a department to regularly evaluate the subject area for changes in curricular thought, pedagogy, technology, and content. This review may result in changes in materials, course redesign, scope and sequence, or even the addition or removal of courses. (Interviews with teachers and administrators as well as a review of policies in the faculty/staff handbook.)

Example #2:

Develop a formal teacher evaluation process with which to conduct annual reviews to promote improved teacher effectiveness in the classroom. (Indicator 4.9)

A system of teacher evaluation must be in place which includes indicators that describe not only the teaching that occurs in the classroom but also the behind-the-scenes work of planning, professional development, communicating with families, and participating in a professional community. Post observation conferences help instructors identify areas of strengths and weaknesses which can be incorporated in the Individual Professional Development Plan for faculty. (Staff handbook, teacher, Self-study Section 4, administrator and teacher interviews.)

The following apply to both commendations and recommendations:

1. The commendations and recommendations must relate to indicators. The indicators are to follow the statement, in parentheses, and there can be more than one listed.
2. Each of the recommendations and commendations need to be documented by at least two references, if possible, regarding where the information was obtained. Examples are “student interview,” “classroom observation,” “student exemplars,” “board member handbook,” or wherever information was located. If you are referring to the school’s Self-study, refer to “Self-study, Standard 3, pg. 43”.
3. Make sure that each recommendation and commendation are written in full sentences. The statement of each should stand alone as the action that needs to occur or the statement of commendation.
4. The description may be 1–3 sentences that help with detail, context, or rationale for the commendation or recommendation. This should not get into specific people or actions that will remedy the situation. The description may detail how the school is doing part of what is required but needs to do more in order to come into compliance with the indicator.
5. Be sure to have each recommendation and commendation checked for spelling, grammar, and tone by the person who wrote it and at least one other person. The chair and assistant chair will be the final editors for the entire report.
6. The focus of the commendation or recommendation should be identified as an action of the school and not as that of an individual or group. Even if the action identifies a department of one person, it should still target the program or initiative, not the actions of the person. (Recommendations written for WASC require the position or groups of people be identified.)
7. Very rarely should a recommendation and a commendation cover the same area. If that is the team’s inclination, then it is important to specify why one is a strength and the other a weakness. (For example, data assessment and analysis may be strong at one level and very weak at another level because of the principal at each of those levels. In that case, it would be important to note the specific initiatives or the levels where those strengths and weaknesses are without mentioning the individuals involved.)
8. It should be rare for the school and the visiting team to find themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum, with one commending an aspect of the program and the other recommending improvement in it based on indicator ratings. If that seems appropriate, the description should explain why that has occurred and what specific evidence justifies the discrepancy.
9. Commendations and recommendations need to be agreed upon by the entire visiting team. If the team cannot agree on one, consider rewording it or removing it altogether. When the report is complete, all the commendations and recommendations stand as a reflection of the entire team.

10. As teams work to develop recommendations that fit the school, it is very easy for them to overstep their authority. This often happens by being too prescriptive. Sometimes, the team is simply trying to make a suggestion based on their own experience but it comes across as telling the school to solve the problem in a certain way. Avoid recommendations which are not tied directly to a standard or indicator, providing specific means/tools for answering the recommendation, and/or writing a recommendation that only matches the “Exceeds Compliance” level (see example below).

Too Prescriptive

Develop more regular communication procedures regarding assessment and student achievement with online programs such as RenWeb and ACSI’s DataOnline as well as weekly newsletters in the elementary school. (Indicator 5.9)

Parents have indicated that they are unhappy with the current out-of-date online grading program leadership and faculty are using. Parents feel that teachers don’t care and they don’t know what to do about it. They want weekly newsletters for elementary and up-to-date grades online for secondary students. The school has indicated that it is open to considering other options but it has not budgeted for an upgrade at this time. (Parent and staff interviews, budget review, survey results)

Well-written

Develop regular communication regarding assessment and student achievement. Both formative and summative assessments can be utilized to assure that parents receive information in a timely fashion. (Indicator 5.9)

Parents have indicated that they are not pleased with the current level of communication regarding grading and assessment results for their students. Little is sent home to parents in the way of assessment results and grades are typically not posted nor up-to-date. The leadership has indicated that it is open to considering other options but it has not decided on any new alternatives at this point. (Parent and staff interviews, budget review, survey results)

Note: WASC recommendations require specific information about Who is involved in the action recommended, What they are going to do related to the indicator, and Why (the “so what?”).

Appendix B—Writing the Standard Overview

The visiting team report contains a narrative section for each standard. Each section begins with an overview describing how the team found the standard demonstrated in the school. Each narrative reflects “what is,” not “what should be,” and should not go into specifics. The overview often states whether the school is fulfilling its own vision for this standard.

One member of the visiting team is usually assigned as the leader for each standard and is responsible for writing the standard overview. (A sample overview is included in the sample team report.)

Multiple paragraphs are allowed for these standard overviews, but they should not be lengthy. This is the only narrative for each standard. For Standard 5, one narrative for each division is written for the instructional program. It is likely to be longer than the others in order to give a complete picture of the school. However, it is not necessary to discuss each individual subject area (Part B in the school’s self-study) unless the area is outstanding and deserves a commendation OR needs attention by the school requiring a recommendation.

After reading the overview, it should be clear why the commendations and recommendations have been given to the school. However, the team does not need to repeat everything in the description for each commendation and recommendation. The overview can often provide the context that helps make sense of the specific commendations and recommendations. (An example might be that the school has undergone some significant changes, added a key staff member, or perhaps is struggling financially. While these things cannot be the target of the recommendations or commendations, they would be helpful to reference in the overview because they would shed light on the need for certain commendations or recommendations.)

Helpful Grammatical Reminders

Follow standardized rules of written English unless some deviation has been requested by ACSI for a special reason. The Chair and Assistant Chair should ensure the report is grammatically correct before submitting to the regional office. (See *Formatting Team Reports*.)

Rules for Capitalization:

1. Capitalize school subjects if they are names of languages, specific numbered courses, or specific courses (French, Algebra I, algebra classes, World History, history class, mathematics curriculum, etc.).
2. Capitalize the names of particular departments (Language Arts Department, Social Studies Department, the department head, etc.).

3. Words describing roles (administration, the faculty, the school board, the pastor, the visiting team) are not capitalized. If these nouns are used as part of a title, they are to be capitalized (Pastor Brown, Administrator Doe, etc.).
4. Names of grade-level classes are not capitalized. Example: The administration includes freshmen on the student planning team. (Sec. 7, Student ad hoc team)

Abbreviations and Numbers:

1. Use few abbreviations. Use the full name of a course or program before referring to it by use of an acronym or initials. Not all readers of the report may know what they mean.
2. Use numerals for numbers 10 and over.
3. A number at the beginning of a sentence is written out. If it is a long number or if writing it out is awkward, rephrase the sentence, changing the position of the number.
4. Use a comma to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series. Look at editorial guidelines and see how this is written.
5. Use a hyphen:
 - a. between a prefix and a proper noun or adjective, as in “pre-Columbian.”
 - b. between a prefix ending in *i* and a root word beginning with *i*, as in “semi-independent”.
 - c. There is no simple rule for hyphenating most compound nouns. Usage varies widely. In three different publications, one may find the same word written with a hyphen, as two words, and written together with no hyphen. Consult a dictionary. If the dictionary does not list a particular word (either as one word or with a hyphen), write it as two words. This is a guideline generally accepted by grammarians.
6. A verb agrees with its subject in number and person. Phrases or clauses coming between the subject and the verb do not affect the subject-verb agreement.
7. For any other grammar questions, we suggest using the free www.grammarly.com.

Appendix C—Commission Policy on Staff Qualifications and Critical Indicators

There are indicators that reflect the policies established by the ACSI Commission on Accreditation. Certain indicators are considered critical, and 90% of them must be at the compliance level or higher for a visiting team to review the school. The critical indicators are listed below. In addition, there is an explanation of the critical indicators that address the professional qualifications for teachers and administrators.

CRITICAL INDICATORS:

All of the standards in REACH should be met at the compliance 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. If a critical indicator is non-compliant (NC) or partially compliant (PC), the standard rating will either be partial or non-compliant.

Note: If a visiting team determines, based on the REACH Rubrics Manual, that the school has fulfilled the substance of the compliant-level wording of the critical indicator in question, and is lacking only in ancillary evidence (e.g., documentation, training, regular review, etc.), the team may allow the standard rating to remain compliant provided that the rest of the indicators within the standard warrant such a rating. However, if multiple critical indicators within a standard fall under this exception, the standard rating will either be partial or non-compliant.

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 standalone 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 school 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/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)

4.5 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.

5.0 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AND RESOURCES

5.1 The curriculum documents developed by the school provide a well-documented biblical basis for instruction of students in each course 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 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, provincial, 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 well 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 stakeholders. The plan is viewed as a strategy for strengthening mission effectiveness and vision accomplishment. (C)

Professional Training—Noncredentialed and Nondegree K–12 Faculty

It is the expectation of ACSI that all of the leadership and teaching faculty are professionally qualified for their positions.

This means that each one has a college degree and is assigned to a level and courses related to their field of training. Accredited schools must have a policy and practice of hiring only qualified and credentialed administrators and faculty.

In cases where a school is not in compliance with the indicator, the ACSI Commission has established the waiver process. There are two types of waivers that ACSI permits for accredited schools. A temporary waiver may be granted for a faculty member who will soon finish the requirements for a bachelors degree. A permanent waiver may be granted if the faculty member will not be qualified within a reasonable time frame. The waiver must be requested from and approved by the Regional Accreditation Commission. Schools will include waivers on the certification spreadsheet submitted with the self-study. The team chair should verify that all waivers are approved with the Regional Office. Any combination of waivers (permanent and temporary) are not to exceed 10% of the total staff by FTE.

ACSI Certification for 80 Percent of K–12 Faculty

Schools must maintain a minimum of 80 percent appropriately certified faculty to meet critical indicator 4.6. (See the Rubrics Manual for more details.) Schools who do not maintain this, as indicated in their annual report, will be placed on “Advised” status. The 80 percent plateau is calculated on the basis of FTE teaching staff (i.e., two half-time teachers equal one full-time teacher). New hires are not required to be certified by ACSI in their first year of employment, nor do they count against the school’s 80 percent requirement.

Early education requirements are determined as stated in the appropriate EE equivalency charts.

ACSI Administrator/Executive Leadership Certification

The educational leaders of the school must be appropriately certified as administrators. (See indicator 4.4 in the Rubrics Manual for more details.) This includes the administrator, headmaster, superintendent, executive director, and principals. In situations where the school has a noneducationally trained person listed as the head of the school (e.g., a pastor) the school must demonstrate it is operated by a trained educational leader who fulfills all of the indicators under the Executive Leadership standard. Newly hired administrators do not need to be ACSI certified the first year and do not count against the 100 percent requirement for certification. (Early Education Directors are not required to be ACSI certified but must meet the educational qualifications in indicator 4.4a.)

NOTE: ANY EXCEPTION TO THESE GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY OR LEADERSHIP NOTED ABOVE MUST BE REVIEWED WITH THE ACSI ACADEMIC SERVICES OFFICE PRIOR TO THE TEAM VISIT.