Accreditation by School Progress (ASP)

August 2017 Edition

Accreditation by School Progress (ASP) is a protocol for reaccreditation using action research to engage the entire school community in continuous improvement. The centerpiece of ASP is a collaborative, school-wide project that blends educational practice with research to impact student outcomes and performance.

ACSI ACCREDITED

ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

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Forward 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.

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:

  ◦ Cognia (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 earlyeducation@acsi.org to receive information on the state approval process.)

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 R. Wilcox, EdD
Executive Director, ACSI Commission on Accreditation

Introduction and Conditions of Eligibility

Accreditation by School Progress (ASP) is a protocol for reaccreditation through action research that engages the entire school community with the goal of school improvement. Schools accredited through ASP will continue to demonstrate that they meet the ACSI REACH accreditation standards. As contrasted with the traditional accreditation self-study, however, the centerpiece of ASP accreditation is a collaborative project that blends research with educational practice to improve student outcomes and performance.

A school that seeks reaccreditation through ASP must demonstrate that it meets the following **six conditions of eligibility:**

1. Success in maintaining REACH standards and progress on major recommendations during the previous term of accreditation;

2. Shared focus on continuous school improvement by all school constituencies;

3. Stability as a viable school (in terms of school culture, leadership, mission and vision, and finances);

4. Student outcomes that are schoolwide, well-defined, integrated in instructional and co-curricular programs, and regularly assessed;

5. Systems that can support a project of significant breadth, depth, and rigor as required by ASP (e.g., collaborative teams and project management); and

6. Support for educational research, as evidenced by staff experience and competency, as well as a historical pattern of improving the learning environment as a result of regular assessment.

A school's eligibility for the ASP protocol is discussed by the school with the ACSI divisional office with the submission of the year three annual report. Schools are approved to seek reaccreditation using the ASP protocol at the determination of the ACSI divisional office and commission. The ACSI divisional commission retains the final prerogative regarding which protocol (ASP or traditional) a school should use to seek reaccreditation. If dual accreditation is sought (e.g., with MSA, WASC or Cognia), the divisional office will provide guidance on the process and required documentation.

It should be noted that as part of the requirement to maintain the REACH standards of accreditation, ASP schools must submit an annual report form and accompanying documentation (such as the school certification spreadsheet and statement of financial practices). ASP schools must also follow the REACH exceptions process for Indicator 4.6, including applications for Permanent or Temporary Faculty Waivers.

Standalone early education (EE) programs are not eligible to use the ASP protocol. EE programs affiliated with ASP-accredited elementary or comprehensive schools have the option to be included in the ASP protocol (or alternatively, programs can conduct an EE self-study for those indicators pertaining to EE). Regardless, EE programs that are affiliated with ASP schools must continue to meet REACH standards for EE as well as utilize all required REACH forms for annual reporting.

ASP Process Standards

Accreditation by ASP involves a multi-year process of engaging in action research for school improvement. Thus, in addition to the ACSI REACH accreditation standards, schools utilizing the ASP protocol are required to meet a set of seven process standards. These process standards are essential in three ways. First, they assist schools in determining their readiness for ASP. Second, they give focus to the ASP project throughout the accreditation term. Finally, they serve as a key metric for the visiting team in validating the ASP project at the end of the term. The ASP Process Standards are as follows:

Process Standard One: School Profile

The school has a clear understanding of its history, philosophy, vision, mission, and core values, and the ASP project is aligned with the school's foundational statements for each. The school also performs regular program evaluation and analysis of its constituencies through the use of surveys and other data collection methods; the resulting data is used in determining organizational needs, priorities, and direction, and guides the ASP project.

Process Standard Two: School Improvement

The school demonstrates a commitment to an ongoing process of systematic improvement. Priorities for school improvement efforts, including the ASP project, are determined through comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder involvement.

Process Standard Three: Broad Involvement

The school, through its leadership, collaboratively engages the entire school staff as well as families, students, and other stakeholders in all phases of the school improvement process, including selecting and implementing the ASP project. The project must include all grade levels of the school.

Process Standard Four: Schoolwide Student Outcomes

The school has a set of well-defined student outcomes, which are integrated throughout the academic and co-curricular program and are regularly assessed. The connection between the ASP project and student outcomes, including student performance, is clearly delineated, and the goals of the ASP project are tied to the improvement of instruction and student learning. The school evaluates and reports the extent to which the ASP project impacts student outcomes and performance, as well as contributes to the attainment of schoolwide learning goals.

Process Standard Five: Strategic Project Management

The school develops a plan for a multi-year project that includes the project's rationale, goals, needed resources, assessment components, and timeframe for each aspect of the project. Ongoing project management includes regular monitoring, obtaining feedback, making warranted adjustments, and documenting progress.

Process Standard Six: Action Research

The school conducts a thorough analysis of the project impact, including both the extent to which the project goals were met and the project's impact on student outcomes and performance. This includes developing a research plan; collecting baseline, annual, and summative data through a variety of assessment measures (both quantitative and qualitative); and analyzing data to determine the project impact. Data collection methods should be longitudinal and include nationally-normed surveys of stakeholders, institutional data related to student outcomes and performance, and qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups, student portfolios, learning artifacts).

Process Standard Seven: Reporting and Dissemination

The school documents the project and submits required reports throughout the accreditation term. All reports include specific data to support the school's conclusions. Through facilitated opportunities, project findings are shared with the broader learning community comprised of ASP schools.
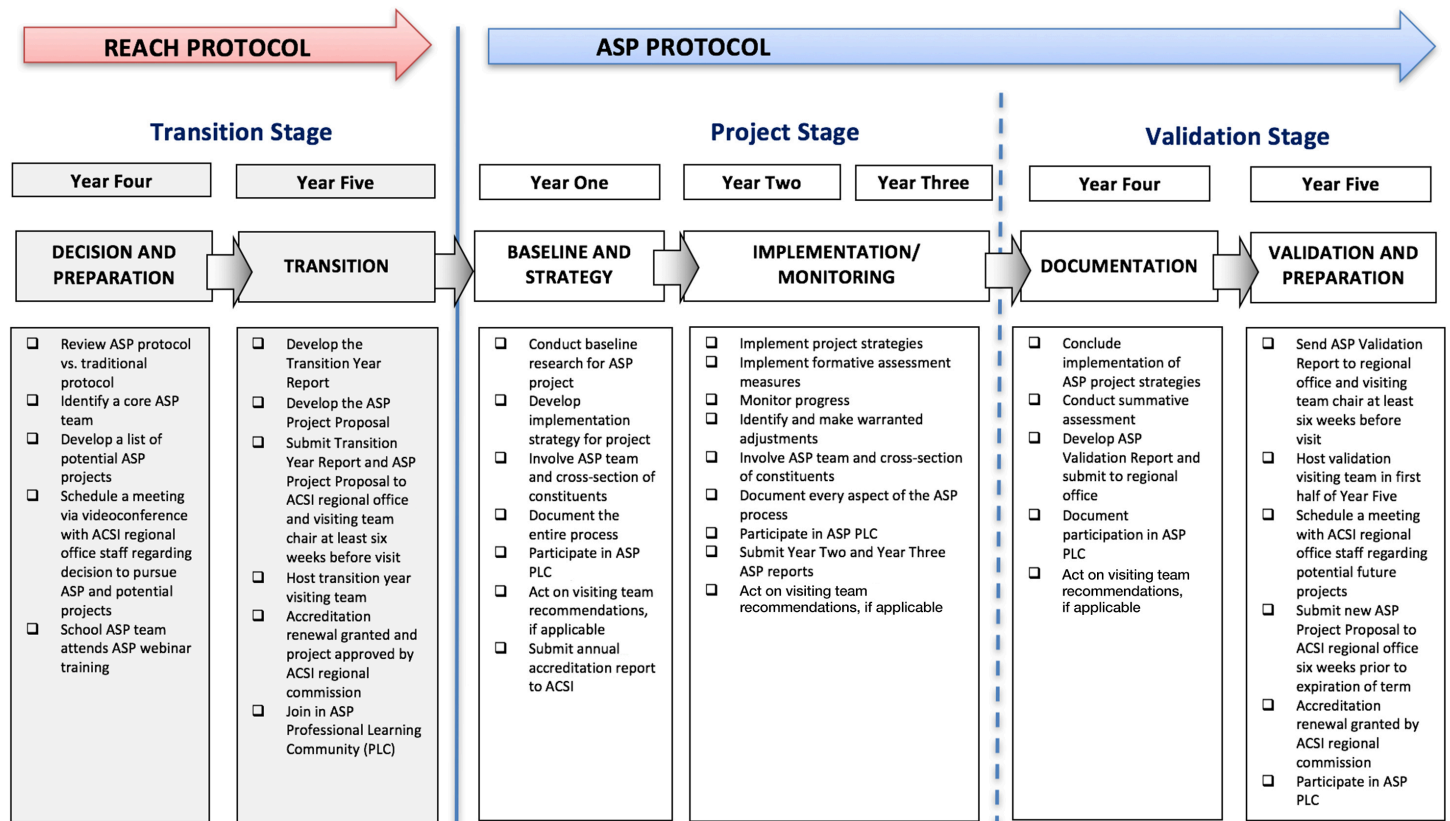
Overview of School Responsibilities

Leading up to and throughout the ASP term, the school engages in three stages: the **transition stage** (the fourth and fifth years of the REACH protocol); the **project stage** (Year One, Year Two and Year Three of the ASP accreditation term); and the **validation stage** (Year Four and Year Five of the ASP accreditation term). For those schools that have completed a full ASP cycle and are renewing accreditation using the ASP protocol, the validation stage is immediately followed by the project stage. The figure below provides a timeline for these stages and school responsibilities by stage, which are also described in detail on pages 8–13.

It should be noted that regardless of the stage, schools will be required to submit an annual report. Schools will not be required to maintain a separate Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP), however, as the ASP project satisfies the REACH requirement for a CSIP.

Additionally, schools should participate in the ASP Professional Learning Community (PLC) throughout the ASP term. This online community (utilizing a closed discussion group in ConNEXUS or equivalent) is comprised of ACSI-accredited schools engaged in ASP projects and is intended to provide support and mentorship. As a group, the ASP PLC shares interests, strategies, content, research questions, assessment tools, and project findings.

Figure 1. Overview of School Responsibilities by Stage and Year

REACH PROTOCOL		ASP PROTOCOL				
Transition Stage		**Project Stage**			**Validation Stage**	
Year Four	Year Five	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
DECISION AND PREPARATION	**TRANSITION**	**BASELINE AND STRATEGY**	**IMPLEMENTATION/ MONITORING**		**DOCUMENTATION**	**VALIDATION AND PREPARATION**

Year Four — DECISION AND PREPARATION
- Review ASP protocol vs. traditional protocol
- Identify a core ASP team
- Develop a list of potential ASP projects
- Schedule a meeting via videoconference with ACSI regional office staff regarding decision to pursue ASP and potential projects
- School ASP team attends ASP webinar training

Year Five — TRANSITION
- Develop the Transition Year Report
- Develop the ASP Project Proposal
- Submit Transition Year Report and ASP Project Proposal to ACSI regional office and visiting team chair at least six weeks before visit
- Host transition year visiting team
- Accreditation renewal granted and project approved by ACSI regional commission
- Join in ASP Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Year One — BASELINE AND STRATEGY
- Conduct baseline research for ASP project
- Develop implementation strategy for project
- Involve ASP team and cross-section of constituents
- Document the entire process
- Participate in ASP PLC
- Act on visiting team recommendations, if applicable
- Submit annual accreditation report to ACSI

Year Two and Year Three — IMPLEMENTATION/ MONITORING
- Implement project strategies
- Implement formative assessment measures
- Monitor progress
- Identify and make warranted adjustments
- Involve ASP team and cross-section of constituents
- Document every aspect of the ASP process
- Participate in ASP PLC
- Submit Year Two and Year Three ASP reports
- Act on visiting team recommendations, if applicable

Year Four — DOCUMENTATION
- Conclude implementation of ASP project strategies
- Conduct summative assessment
- Develop ASP Validation Report and submit to regional office
- Document participation in ASP PLC
- Act on visiting team recommendations, if applicable

Year Five — VALIDATION AND PREPARATION
- Send ASP Validation Report to regional office and visiting team chair at least six weeks before visit
- Host validation visiting team in first half of Year Five
- Schedule a meeting with ACSI regional office staff regarding potential future projects
- Submit new ASP Project Proposal to ACSI regional office six weeks prior to expiration of term
- Accreditation renewal granted by ACSI regional commission
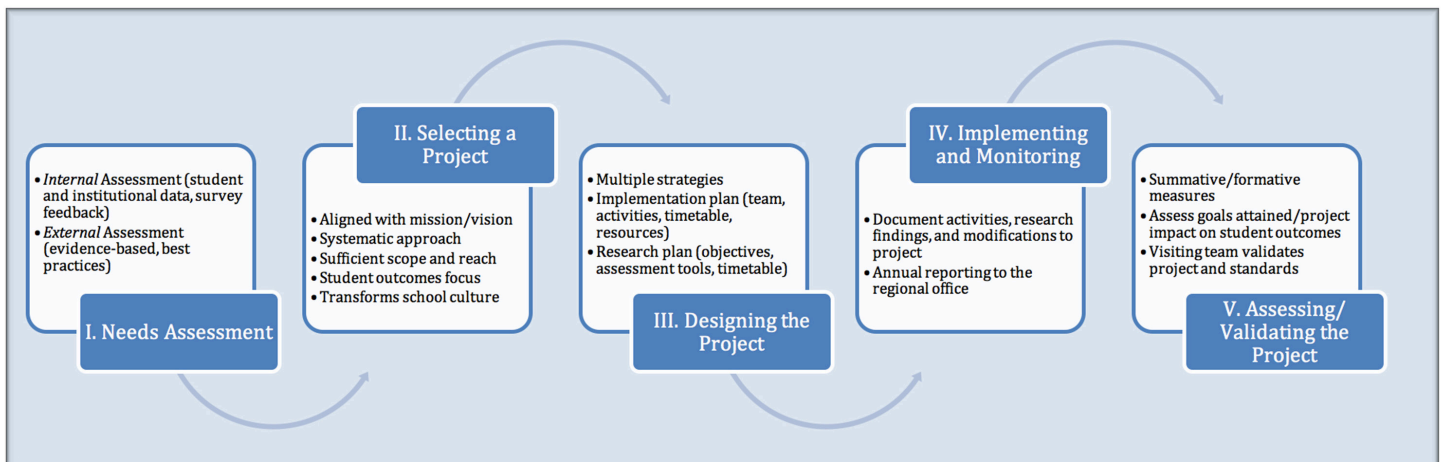- Participate in ASP PLC

ASP Project Overview

In order to obtain and maintain accreditation through ASP, the school must engage in the following sequence of activities (depicted in the figure below) leading up to, and continuing through, the accreditation term:

I. **Needs assessment**, in which the school identifies areas of its mission that would be well-served by extensive study, planning, and implementation of change. This involves both internal assessment (of student achievement, nationally-normed constituent surveys, and previous studies such as accreditation reports) and external assessment (researching literature, best practices, and other schools/programs to gather pertinent data on the selected issues).

II. **Selecting a project** from those areas identified through the needs assessment process as targets for improvement. Criteria for an ASP project are as follows:

   a. The project is linked directly to the school's mission and vision;

   b. The project addresses an area for improvement that warrants a systematic approach (targeting broad areas of change, and affecting multiple school constituents);

   c. The project has a sufficient scope so as to require a multi-year effort;

   d. The project has a sufficient reach so as to involve all grades of the school;

   e. The project addresses and measures impact on a diverse range of student outcomes, including student performance; and

   f. The project has the potential to be transformational, meaning that if fully implemented over the course of the accreditation cycle, it will shape school culture for years to come.

III. **Designing the project** to include multiple strategies aimed at addressing the selected improvement area. Project design includes an implementation plan (with a project team, list of project activities, timetable, and resource allocation) as well as a formal research plan (including a set of objectives by which project success will be measured, formative and summative assessment tools to gauge attainment of the objectives, and timetable).

IV. **Implementing and monitoring** the project which includes conducting and documenting project activities, research, and any modifications to the project, as well as submitting annual ASP reports to the divisional office.

V. **Assessing and validating** the project through both summative and formative measures, to determine the degree of progress made in meeting objectives (with particular attention given to the project's impact on the identified range of student outcomes, including student performance). Following the school's submission of a summative report, a team comprised of peer Christian school educators visits the school to validate project findings and standards compliance.

Figure 2. ASP Project Overview

- *Internal* Assessment (student and institutional data, survey feedback)
- *External* Assessment (evidence-based, best practices)

I. Needs Assessment

II. Selecting a Project
- Aligned with mission/vision
- Systematic approach
- Sufficient scope and reach
- Student outcomes focus
- Transforms school culture

- Multiple strategies
- Implementation plan (team, activities, timetable, resources)
- Research plan (objectives, assessment tools, timetable)

III. Designing the Project

IV. Implementing and Monitoring
- Document activities, research findings, and modifications to project
- Annual reporting to the regional office

- Summative/formative measures
- Assess goals attained/project impact on student outcomes
- Visiting team validates project and standards

V. Assessing/Validating the Project

Transition to ASP

YEAR FOUR of REACH Protocol: Decision and Preparation

During the fourth year of the REACH protocol, the school will engage in a number of activities to begin the reaccreditation process and determine whether the ASP protocol is the best fit for the school. The school will:

1. Review the ASP protocol;

2. Attend ASP webinar training;

3. Verify compliance with REACH accreditation standards, as required in the annual report;

4. Identify the school's core ASP team;

5. Develop a list of potential ASP projects;

6. Contact the ACSI divisional office to schedule a meeting via video conference for consultation with divisoinal staff regarding the decision to pursue ASP (during which time the list of potential ASP projects will be discussed).

YEAR FIVE of REACH Protocol: Transition

The transition year occurs when the school is completing its term of accreditation using the traditional protocol and will proceed with the ASP protocol.

KEY DOCUMENTATION

Key documentation, comprised of the transition year report and ASP project proposal, is due to the ACSI divisional office and the visiting team chair at least six weeks prior to the transition team visit. Required sections for both are detailed below (*note that suggested page lengths are provided as a guide*).

The **Transition Year Report** should contain the following four sections:

a. **School Profile.** In *approximately two to three pages*, develop a written narrative that: i) summarizes the history of the school; ii) describes student and community demographics; iii) provides an overview of the school's programs, facilities, and services; iv) profiles the school faculty and their qualifications; and v) identifies significant challenges the school faces in the accreditation process.

b. **Significant Changes.** Identify any major changes in the school since the last accreditation visit that relate to the standards of accreditation. *Submit one or two concise paragraphs* describing each significant change, and identify the impact of the change, if any, on the school's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

c. **Verification of Standards.** Engage stakeholders in assessing the school's compliance with all standards of accreditation, and provide the following:

   i. A completed, up-to-date REACH Standards Indicators Checklist. This should be accompanied by a completed School Indicator Ratings Spreadsheet, as well as a current School Certification Spreadsheet.

   ii. Give a written explanation for any standard with which the school is in partial or non-compliance, with *one or two concise paragraphs describing each standard*.

   iii. In *one or two paragraphs*, provide a written description of how major stakeholders were involved in assessing the school's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

d. **Major Recommendations and Continuous School Improvement Update.** In approximately *one to two pages*, develop a narrative of how each of the major recommendations from the previous team report have been addressed, and how the CSIP has been developed and implemented.

The **ASP Project Proposal** is a document that presents the intended ASP project. Schools should discuss ideas for potential projects with their accreditation consultant before progressing to the stage of writing the formal proposal. The consultant will work with the school to ensure a project is chosen that is a) doable in scope, b) of sufficient strength to impact school culture, and c) well-designed, so that the impact on student outcomes and performance can be assessed. Along with the Transition Year Report, the ASP proposal is due to the ACSI divisional office and the visiting team chair at least six weeks prior to the transition team visit.

The ASP project involves action research that is conducted by school personnel to address one or more major areas in need of change or improvement at the school. As such, an ASP project is both a practical project (a new or enhanced program, initiative, process, etc.) and a research project (a comprehensive assessment of the impact of that program, initiative, process, etc.). This is reflected in the required components of the ASP proposal, as listed below. Please note that it may be helpful to utilize the components below as the headings in the project proposal document (*note also that suggested page lengths are provided as a guide*).

a. **Needs Assessment.** In *approximately two to three pages*, provide a description of the needs assessment process used to determine potential ASP projects. The goal of needs assessment is to identify major areas that can be targeted for improvement, in terms of both student learning and school effectiveness. This should include both:

    i. Comprehensive internal assessment to identify areas in need of improvement (survey instruments need to be included in this research); and

    ii. External assessment to gain background information on potential project areas (e.g., literature reviews, examining related best practices, and identifying exemplar schools/programs).

b. **Project Description.** In no more than *one paragraph*, provide a brief description of the proposed project (see Appendix A for a list of sample projects).

c. **Project Rationale.** In *approximately one to two pages,* articulate how the project relates to the school's:

    i. *Mission/Core Value Statements:* Discuss how the project relates to the mission and core value statements of the school. Describe how it is anticipated that the project will affect/impact the mission and core value statements, as well as the overall culture of the school.

    ii. *Student Learning Outcomes/Goals:* Identify the student learning outcomes/goals that will be addressed through the project, and describe the anticipated impact of the project on these outcomes/goals. While a diverse range of outcomes/goals is anticipated, student performance must be included.

    iii. *Potential Impact on Christian Education:* Discuss how insights and learning from the project may potentially impact Christian education and inform best practices in the field.

d. **Institutional Support.** In *approximately one to two pages*, describe the institutional support that exists for the project, as well as implementation considerations in the following areas:

    i. *ASP Team:* Identify who will be involved in the project and in what capacity. The team should be comprised of individuals from multiple school constituencies, one or more of whom should have knowledge and experience related to educational research methods.

    ii. *Governance and Senior Leadership:* Assess the level of support the ASP project has from its governing body/bodies as well as senior leadership, and provide documentation of support in an appendix (e.g., letters of support, copy of board minutes showing resolution to pursue ASP).

    iii. *Working Strategy:* Describe the anticipated strategy for accomplishing work related to the ASP project (e.g., meeting schedule, reporting/committee structure, ongoing communication with constituents).

    iv. *Funding Considerations:* Describe actionable plans for funding the project.

e. **Research Design.** While the first year of ASP accreditation will involve more in-depth planning related to research methods, it is critical that schools begin articulating their approach in the proposal so that the consultant and visiting team can provide guiding feedback. To this end, in *approximately two to three pages*, provide preliminary descriptions of the project's research design for each of the following areas:

    i. Guiding research questions.

    ii. Learning outcomes and student performance goals that will be targeted and assessed through the project.

    iii. Methodology, including: type of study to be conducted; data collection strategies (instrumentation, baseline data); and plan for data analysis.

    iv. Indicators or results that will be accepted as evidence that the project's goals have been accomplished.

    v. Timeline for the research aspect of the project.

f. **Challenges.** In *approximately one to two paragraphs*, identify significant challenges that are anticipated in designing, obtaining support for, and implementing the proposed ASP project.

TRANSITION YEAR TEAM VISIT

During the transition year, a team of two or three Christian school educators visits the school for approximately 2 to 2.5 days. In advance of their visit, the chair of the transition visiting team will verify and review all key documents and determine the school's compliance with the standards and critical indicators for continued accreditation (a video conference is recommended).

During the visit, the team will review the transition report, as well as spend significant time discussing the ASP Project Proposal with the school leadership team and constituents and conduct interviews, focus groups, and observations. It should be noted that the team may issue major recommendations related to the standards of accreditation should they be warranted. The visiting team submits their report to the ACSI divisional commission with a recommendation regarding reaccreditation and the school's preparation for ASP. The commission will decide if the school meets the REACH standards and is adequately prepared to use the ASP protocol, and grants approval for the proposed ASP project.

Project Stage

ASP YEAR ONE: Baseline/Strategy

During Year One, activities center on gathering baseline data for the ASP project and developing an implementation strategy for the project. This process involves the ASP team as well as a cross-section of school constituents. The entire process must be documented by the school, and summarized in the Year One ASP report. The ASP report is submitted to the ACSI divisional office, and should include the following sections for Year One (*suggested page lengths are provided as a guide*):

A. **PROGRAMMATIC PROGRESS:** In *approximately one to two pages*, describe program progress (what has been done programmatically in the targeted area/s of the project). This section should include a description of major project activities during Year One and a status report for each (e.g., completed, in process, not yet initiated).

B. **RESEARCH PLAN:** For the ASP Year One report only, schools must provide a research plan that outlines the assessment of the project. While this can take a number of formats (e.g., a detailed table, a visual map), the plan should be *approximately three to four pages* include the following:

   a. Targeted student learning outcomes , to include student performance;

   b. Targeted institutional outcomes (overall school improvement goals related to the project, whether cultural, organizational, instructional, etc.);

   c. Methods of data collection, including specific instruments to be used;

   d. Plan for data analysis; and

   e. Timeline for research activities, including data collection and analysis.

C. **RESEARCH PROGRESS:** Describe any research progress, including what has been done to date (e.g., collection of baseline data). This section should be *approximately one to two pages* in length, and include:

   a. A description of major research activities during Year One and a status report for each (e.g., completed, in process, not yet done).

   b. Thorough presentation of an analysis of any data collected to date (if data have not yet been analyzed, describe plans for analysis and provide a timeline).

D. **INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS:** In *approximately one or two paragraphs*, describe institutional support and progress for the ASP project. This should include descriptions of ASP-related faculty and staff training, leadership given to the project, committee work, and resource allocation (including funding).

E. **PROJECT CHANGES:** In a *brief paragraph or two* describe any revisions to the ASP study design (changes made since the ASP Project Proposal) with rationale and expected impact on the overall project.

F. **CHALLENGES:** In a *brief paragraph or two* identify any challenges faced in implementing and/or conducting research for the ASP project.

ASP YEAR TWO and YEAR THREE: Implementation/Monitoring

During Years Two and Three, the school implements the project strategies as well as formative assessment measures. The ASP team monitors progress and identifies and makes warranted adjustments. This process involves the ASP team as well as a cross-section of school constituents, and is documented and summarized in the Years Two and Three annual ASP reports. The report is submitted to the ACSI divisional office, and should include the following sections for Years Two and Three (*suggested page lengths are provided as a guide*):

A. **PROGRAMMATIC PROGRESS:** In *approximately one to two pages*, describe program progress (what has been done programmatically in the targeted area/s of the project). This section should include a description of major project activities during the present year and a status report for each (e.g., completed, in process, not yet initiated).

B. **RESEARCH PROGRESS:** In *approximately two to three pages*, describe research progress, including what has been done to date. This section should include:

   a. A description of major research activities during the present year and a status report for each (e.g., completed, in process, not yet done).

   b. Thorough presentation of an analysis of any data collected to date (if data have not yet been analyzed, provide a description of plans for analysis with a timeline).

C. **INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS:** In *approximately one or two paragraphs*, describe institutional support and progress for the ASP project. This should include descriptions of ASP-related faculty and staff training, leadership given to the project, committee work, and resource allocation (including funding).

D. **PROJECT CHANGES:** In *approximately one or two paragraphs* describe any revisions to the ASP study design during the current year, with rationale and expected impact on the overall project.

E. **CHALLENGES:** In *approximately one or two paragraphs* identify any challenges faced in implementing and/or conducting research for the ASP project.

Validation Stage

ASP YEAR FOUR: Documentation

The school's major responsibilities during Year Four of ASP accreditation are to submit a culminating report regarding the ASP project and accreditation term, as follows:

ASP VALIDATION REPORT

During Year Four, implementation of the ASP project is completed and the focus shifts to assessing the impact of the project. The school engages in summative assessment related to impact on student outcomes and performance, as well as overall school improvement. This should include analysis and comparison of baseline and project data, as well as obtaining input from school constituents to assess the total impact of the project (e.g., through nationally normed stakeholder surveys, focus groups, interviews).

In the second half of Year Four, the school submits a culminating ASP Validation Report in preparation for a validating team visit in the first half of Year Five. The report is due to the ACSI divisional office and the visiting team chair at least six weeks prior to the scheduled visit (in Year Five). The report should be comprehensive, with required sections as follows (*suggested page lengths are provided as a guide*):

a. **Significant Changes.** Identify any major changes in the school since the last accreditation visit that relate to the standards of accreditation. Submit *one or two concise paragraphs* describing each change, and identifying the impact of the change on the school's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

b. **Verification of Standards.** Engage stakeholders in assessing the school's compliance with all standards of accreditation, and provide the following:

   i. A completed, up-to-date REACH Standards Indicators Checklist. This should be accompanied by a completed School Indicator Ratings Spreadsheet, as well as a current School Certification Spreadsheet.

   ii. Give a written explanation for any standard with which the school is in partial or non-compliance, with *one or two concise paragraphs* describing each standard.

   iii. Provide a written description of how major stakeholders were involved in assessing the school's compliance with the standards of accreditation.

c. **ASP Project Results.** Develop an in-depth narrative of *about 8-10 pages* in length, accompanied by supporting data/evidence (such as charts, tables, etc.), that presents the results of the project. The narrative should address each of the following areas:

   i. Project selection and design;

   ii. Planning and implementation, including obstacles and adjustments;

   iii. Participation by the school staff, constituents, and other stakeholders throughout the term of the project;

   iv. Adherence to the ASP Process Standards (with a description of how each standard was addressed);

   v. Determination of the degree to which the project goals were attained;

   vi. Research findings and conclusions, with supporting data;

   vii. Implications of findings for the school and next steps to be taken;

   viii. Overall impact and value of the project to the school, its culture, and its mission; and

   ix. Future suggestions, including 1) how to improve the ASP process at the school during the next accreditation cycle; and 2) considerations for other schools that might attempt a similar project.

d. **Future ASP Project Ideas.** Provide a brief description of one or more potential ASP project ideas for the next accreditation cycle, should the school wish to continue utilizing the ASP protocol.

ASP YEAR FIVE: Validation and Preparation

The requirements of Year Five of ASP accreditation are: 1) to host a visiting team that will validate the current ASP project; and 2) to develop a new proposal for the future ASP project (if reaccreditation will be sought using the ASP protocol).

VALIDATION VISIT

Following the school's submission of the summative ASP Validation Report (at the end of Year Four), a team of two or three Christian school educators visits the school to validate the project findings and standards compliance. **The validation team visit** is *typically* held during the first half of Year Five for approximately 2 to 2.5 days, during which time the team will:

a. Meet with school personnel who provided leadership to the project to discuss the validation report;

b. Review the research basis, evidence, and data associated with the project;

c. Observe classrooms and other sites involved in the project;

d. Conduct meetings with school constituents who have been involved with the project;

e. Verify that the school is in compliance with the standards of accreditation;

f. Hold an exit meeting with the school staff and share the visiting team's observations regarding the project, as well as feedback on the school's ideas for a future ASP project; and

g. Write a report on their visit insights regarding the project and on the school's report, with commendations and recommendations regarding the project and ASP process standards, as well as suggestions regarding the school's ideas for future projects.

It should be noted that the team may issue major recommendations related to the standards of accreditation should they be warranted.

NEW ASP PROJECT PROPOSAL

Following the team visit, in the *second half* of Year Five, the school prepares a new **ASP Project Proposal** (if continuing reaccreditation using the ASP protocol). During this latter half of Year Five, the school:

1. Contacts the ACSI divisional office to schedule a meeting via video conference with divisional staff for consultation regarding list of future project ideas (which had been developed for the ASP Validation Report). This should be done immediately following the team visit.

2. Develops a new ASP Project Proposal, following the guidelines for the ASP Project Proposal as outlined for the ASP transition year (pages 8-9).

3. Submits the proposal six weeks prior to the end of the accreditation term to the ACSI divisional commission.

Following submission, the divisional commission reviews the new project proposal as well as the results of the Year Five validation visit and makes a determination regarding reaccreditation. The ACSI divisional office will notify the school of the accreditation decision.

Appendix A: Sample ASP Projects

1. Create a comprehensive strategy for utilizing results from the **student assessment program** in classroom instruction. Assess the effectiveness of the strategy in improving student learning outcomes and measured performance.

2. Evaluate the school's **retention of students**, address key areas that can lead to greater retention, and assess the success of efforts to improve retention.

3. Create—or enhance—a model of **instructional technology** at the school. Assess implementation of the model in terms of desired student outcomes.

4. Assess the school's efforts in the area of **students' spiritual development**. Create a targeted program to improve related student outcomes, and assess the program's impact in those areas.

5. Implement school-wide usage of a **specific instructional strategy** (e.g., differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, project-based learning, service-learning). Evaluate teachers' use of the strategy and the impact on student learning outcomes, including student performance.

6. Implement a **whole-school curricular approach** (e.g., writing across the curriculum, an essential questions framework) and evaluate its impact on student learning.

7. Design and implement a program to foster **greater parental involvement** in students' classroom learning, and evaluate its impact on student outcomes.

8. Research the feasibility of a **specialized program** and work on the development (or further development) of one. Examples include a program for students with learning needs, or a school counseling program. Assess the program's impact on student learning outcomes over time.

9. Create a comprehensive, multi-year **professional development (PD) system** for all school staff, with the goal of improving specified student learning outcomes. Evaluate changes in instructional effectiveness and assess the impact of the PD system on the specified outcomes, including student performance..

10. Develop a **schoolwide thematic focus** that is implemented throughout the school's curricula and co-curricular programs, and evaluate the pervasiveness of this focus over time and impact on related student outcomes. Examples include Biblical worldview development, fostering a global/international perspective, and environmental sustainability.

Appendix B: Overview of Consultant Responsibilities

Once a school has been approved to seek reaccreditation using the ASP protocol, a consultant is assigned to the school. Qualifications for the role of consultant include prior experience with ASP (either as an administrator at a school utilizing the ASP protocol, as an ASP visiting team member, or both) as well as knowledge of educational research methods. The ASP consultant receives training from the ACSI divisional office and participates in the ASP Professional Learning Community (PLC). All expenses incurred by the consultant are paid by the school.

There are two types of ASP consultants: the **ASP transition consultant**; and the **ASP validation consultant**. Their roles are as follows:

- **The ASP transition consultant** works with the school during the final two years of the REACH accreditation term, and assists the school in preparing the Transition Year Report and ASP Project Proposal. Normally the ASP transition consultant will chair the transition year visiting team.

- **The ASP validation consultant** works with the school in the final two years of the ASP term, and assists the school in developing the ASP Validation Report and in preparing to host the validation visiting team. The validation consultant will normally chair the validation visit in Year Five, and will assist the school after the visit to develop an ASP project proposal for the new term.

The same consultant may serve for both the transition visit and the validation visit, but this is not always possible due to the span of time between the visits (as the first visit precedes the beginning of the accreditation term, and the second is toward the end).

Both types of consultants engage with schools in the following three steps: **preparation**; **visitation**; and **concluding activities**. These steps are described below, with differences noted between the ASP transition visit and the ASP validation visit.

A. Preparation

Both consultants are responsible for meeting at least twice with school leadership and the ASP team prior to the team visit (one of the meetings must be on-site at the school; other meetings may be via videoconference). During these meetings, and in communication with school leadership leading up to the team visit, the consultant does the following:

1. Ensures the accreditation process and standards are understood by school leadership;

2. Briefs the divisional office on the school's readiness for ASP and submits related reports;

3. Discusses with the school the appropriateness of the project chosen;

4. Guides the school through preparing required documentation (the Transition Year Report and ASP Project Proposal for schools transitioning from REACH to ASP; or the ASP Validation Report for schools concluding the ASP term);

5. Advises the school concerning its readiness for the team visit;

6. Verifies that all the accreditation standards have been met before scheduling a team visit; and

7. Sets a visitation date and communicates it to the divisional office.

B. Visitation

Normally the consultant will chair the visiting team, in which case the consultant will be responsible for organizing and leading the team. The visiting team provides objective verification of the information, analysis, and conclusions reached by the school relative to the accreditation standards, ASP process standards, and ASP project.

Before the visit, the chair prepares the team by:

1. Emailing school documentation to each member of the visiting committee at least six weeks prior to the date of the visit (the Transition Year Report and ASP Project Proposal for schools transitioning from REACH to ASP; or the ASP Validation Report for schools concluding the ASP term);

2. Working with the school to develop a schedule for the visit;

3. Facilitating arrangements for transportation, lodging, meals, and a meeting room for the visiting team; and

4. If necessary, ensuring the school provides supplementary data (e.g., curriculum guides, board policy manual, faculty handbook) for review during the visit.

During the visit, the chair:

1. Orients team members to the school and its facilities;

2. Coordinates classroom observations, and organizes interviews and focus groups (e.g., with the ASP team, administration, board members, parents, students);

3. Oversees the report writing process; and

4. With the visiting team, presents a final oral report to the school's representatives at the conclusion of the visit.

C. Concluding Activities

At the conclusion of the visit, the chair:

1. Ensures team expenses are reimbursed by the school;

2. Reminds the team members of the need to keep information and their report confidential;

3. Edits the final report, which includes the team's recommendation indicating whether accreditation should be granted;

4. Sends the completed report to the ACSI divisional office along with the team ballot, where it is reviewed at the next scheduled meeting of the ACSI divisional accreditation commission; and

5. In the case of the ASP validation consultant, assists the school after the visit to develop an ASP project proposal for the new term.

Chairs should refer to the ASP Accreditation Chair and Team Member Handbook for detailed information on their roles and responsibilities.

Appendix C: Overview of ACSI Divisional Office Responsibilities

Each ACSI divisional office supports those schools in their division that are seeking or have obtained accreditation through ASP. Resources for ASP, such as training webinars for schools and chairs, are provided by ACSI Academic Services. The major responsibilities of divisional offices with regard to ASP are as follows (in sequential order, beginning with schools expressing an interest in pursuing ASP):

1. Direct schools interested in pursuing ASP to the ASP manual and webinars/other resources to be provided by ACSI Academic Services.

2. Meet with schools considering a transition from REACH to ASP (via videoconference) to:

   a. Discuss the ASP requirements and review process indicators;

   b. Assess the school's readiness to engage in ASP based on the conditions of eligibility (page 4 of this manual); and

   c. Review the school's preliminary ASP project ideas for suitability.

   Though not required, a helpful checklist for gauging the school's readiness and project suitability is available from ACSI Academic Services.

3. Make a determination whether a school is ready to engage in ASP, as well as if the school's preliminary project ideas show promise for development into a successful ASP project. Inform the school of the determination regarding their ability to pursue ASP.

4. Assign a transition consultant to the school, provide the consultant with the *ASP Accreditation Chair and Team Member Handbook*, and direct the consultant to webinar training available from ACSI Academic Services. Assist the consultant and school with scheduling the transition year visit. Provide all templates (school and visiting team report) and supporting documents to each. Assign a chair for the visit, if the consultant will not be continuing on to serve in that role.

5. Provide access to the ASP PLC (a closed online group using ConNEXUS or equivalent), once a school has successfully been granted a term of accreditation by the divisional commission.

6. Receive and review ASP annual reports (following the normal process in the division for receiving and reviewing REACH annual reports), including the certification chart and other supporting documents required.

7. Assign a validation consultant to ASP schools seeking reaccreditation. Note that the same consultant may serve for both the transition visit and the validation visit, but this is not always possible due to the span of time between the visits (as the first visit precedes the beginning of the accreditation term, and the second is toward the end). Assist the validation consultant and school with scheduling the validation year visit. Provide all templates (school and visiting team report) and supporting documents to each. Assign a chair for the visit, if the consultant will not be continuing to serve in that role.

8. Meet with ASP renewing schools (via videoconference) to review the school's preliminary ASP project ideas for suitability. Though not required, a helpful checklist for gauging the school's readiness and project suitability is available from ACSI Academic Services.

Appendix D: Additional Resources

Support Documents

Support documents for ASP may be found on the ACSI website: [ASP Documents.](#)
These documents include the following:

- School Administrator ASP Handbook

- ASP Accreditation Chair and Team Member Handbook

- Transition Year Report Template

- ASP Project Proposal Template

- ASP Validation Report Template

- Visiting Team Report Templates (Transition Year and Validation Year)

The REACH manuals and support documents that will be needed by ASP-accredited schools are also available in these locations, and include:

- REACH Standards Manual and Rubrics

- REACH Standards Indicators Checklist

- School Certification Spreadsheet

- Waiver Request Forms

- REACH Early Education (EE) Resources

- Visiting Team Member Application and Values and Ethics Statement

Suggested References

A "toolkit" of articles and research that can inform the ASP process is compiled by the ASP Professional Learning Community and can be obtained by contacting the ACSI divisional office. In addition, the following is suggested as a helpful reference for school leaders and teams in developing an ASP project using an action research model:

Spaulding, D.T., and J. Falco. 2013. *Action research for school leaders*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Appendix E: 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 Headquarters (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)

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Glossary

Accreditation by School Progress (ASP) A protocol for reaccreditation using action research to engage the entire school community in continuous improvement. The centerpiece of ASP is a collaborative, school-wide project that blends educational practice with research to impact student outcomes.

action research A process of inquiry that engages the entire school community in educational practice and research, with the goal of school improvement.

ASP annual report A report that provides the school and ACSI with a yearly evaluation of progress on the ASP project and related research as well as maintenance of accreditation standards.

ASP project proposal A comprehensive proposal prepared by the school either as part of the transition year or in Year Five of the ASP term, which details programmatic and research plans for the chosen ASP project.

ASP validation report The culminating document prepared by the school that provides summative assessment of the ASP project, and also reports on compliance with the standards of accreditation and progress on major recommendations during the accreditation term.

consultant The person who serves first as a school's consultant during the period leading up to the team visit, and then normally as chairperson of the visiting team.

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. For ASP schools, the ASP project qualifies as the CSIP and schools are not required to develop a separate CSIP.

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

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

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

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

process standards The seven established qualitative conditions for Accreditation by School Progress (ASP).

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

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).

standards of accreditation The eight established qualitative conditions for REACH school accreditation.

student outcomes What the school intentionally targets for 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.

transition year report A report developed by the school in preparation for the transition to ASP that includes a school profile, change report, verification of standards, and continuous school improvement status report. The report is submitted to the divisional office and the team chair at least six weeks prior to the transition year visit, along with the ASP Project Proposal.

transition year visit The team visit occurring in the final year of a school's REACH accreditation term as the school seeks reaccreditation using the ASP protocol, which has the purpose of assessing compliance with accreditation standards and the school's preparedness for ASP.

validation visit The team visit occurring in the first half of Year Five of the ASP accreditation term, which has the purpose of validating the school's ASP project and assessing compliance with accreditation standards and ASP process standards.

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 will look like in the future. Alternatively, a description of a preferred future.

visiting team (transition year) The team of educators from outside the school who visit in order to evaluate the school according to the ACSI accreditation standards and policies, as well as assess the school's plans for an ASP project.

visiting team (validation year) The team of educators from outside the school who visit in order to validate the ASP project, as well as evaluate 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 divisional accreditation commission 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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The Accreditation by School Progress (ASP) Manual was accomplished through the dedicated work of the following individuals, with valuable insight and contributions from the divisional offices, accreditation commissions, accrediting agencies, and other qualified experts:

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