

Guiding a School Through an Accreditation Process

Schedule for Online Professional Development

2021 - Five-hour Format

Lesson 1: Process

SPD Housekeeping (10 m)

File Share handout

Briefly discuss this lesson plan document. [**Note**—Lesson objectives in this plan do not meet expectations for student learning objectives because the product of learning will not be evident until a school leader engages in the school accreditation process. =)]

Lesson Objective: Participants will increase their general understanding of these elements of K-12 school accreditation:

1. Reasons for pursuing accreditation,
2. Trends influencing K-12 accreditation,
3. Basic eligibility expectations,
4. Process for AACCS Accreditation, and
5. Major projects in AACCS accreditation.

Procedure:

- PPT slides and handout. Explanation and discussion.
- Q/A

Before we go to lunch –

WBD – “I really hope we talk about...”

30 minute lunch break

Lesson 2:

Lesson Objective: Participants will understand the elements of the consultative visit and the expectations, process, and value of the self-study and the self-study report.

Procedure:

- Display and discuss consultative visit school portion of consultative report template (key to understanding the “must meet” indicators).
- Display and discuss self-study plan instructions, self-study teams illustration, and self-study instructions from standard 6.
- Share screen and illustrate one well-done self-study report standard.

- Q/A

Lesson 3

Lesson Objectives:

1. Participants will identify and describe key indicators from one of the twelve standards.
2. Participants will review expectations for faculty, parent/student, and administrative/policy manuals.

Procedure:

- Display and discuss standards, key indicators, and rubrics using the team report template for S6.
- Display and discuss the Manuals section from the Accreditation Manual.

Lesson 4

Lesson Objective: Participants will understand the expectations of the curriculum guide and the rationale for creating each component of the curriculum guide.

Procedure:

- Display and discuss instructions for creating the curriculum guide.
- Display and discuss illustrations of each CG component: philosophy statement, scope-and-sequence, curriculum map.
- Q/A

Lesson 5

Lesson Objectives:


1. Participants will review the instructions for preparing for a team visit and the schedule for a three-day team visit.
2. Participants will review resources available for reference and use in the Accreditation Resources Folder on the AACCS website.
3. Participants will understand the requirements for completing the School Improvement Plan following a team visit.

Procedure:

- Display and discuss instructions for preparing for a team visit.
- Display and discuss the schedule for a three-day visit.
- Display and discuss instructions for creating the SIP.
- Display and discuss the SIP matrix.
- Display and discuss the recommendations matrix.
- Q/A and closing comments/feedback.

**AACS ACCREDITATION
PROCESS**

By Jeff Walton



1

Why should a school pursue accreditation?

1. School improvement.
2. Evidence to school community of transparency and credibility.
3. Proactive measure ...
 1. Accredited schools are better positioned to take advantage of school choice initiatives.
 2. Colleges and public service sector employees are increasingly requiring that applicants have diplomas from accredited schools.

2

Trends Influencing the 2020 Revision

1. Growing interest in the AACS process
2. General shift from compliance models to school improvement models
3. State and national standards emphasis
4. Curriculum map programs becoming more prevalent
5. Commission's intent to simplify projects and consider their impact on the teaching/learning process

3

Basic Eligibility Requirements

- The school must be clearly Christian in philosophy and practice.
- The school must demonstrate that administrators and teachers have appropriate degrees and training.
- The school must have an organized and effective curriculum.
- The school must be a member in good standing of the American Association of Christian Schools.
- The school must have been in operation as a school for at least two full school years.
- The administrator must have been at the school at least one full school year.
- The school must have a good testimony with other Christian schools, the community, and the businesses that deal with the school.
- The school must demonstrate fiscal responsibility and stability.
- The school must adhere to local, state, and federal health, safety, sanitation, length-of-school-day, and length-of-school-year laws.
- The school must provide the required school profile and documentation that supports the basic eligibility requirements.

4

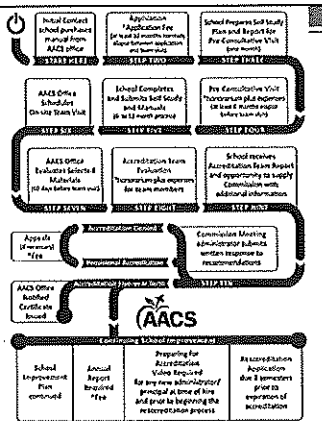
Application and Initial Documents

Include the following documentation with the application.

- School Profile
- Faculty Worksheet
- Legal Compliance Information Sheet
- End-of-Year Financial Report for Last Fiscal Year Completed

5

Path to AACS Accreditation



6

Standards for Accreditation

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The twelve standards describe practices and procedures that exist in quality Christian schools. They are based on research, best practices, and accreditation traditions. They describe schools that are striving for spiritual and academic excellence.

Each standard is followed by a set of indicators. The indicators are descriptions of exemplary practices and processes that will be evident in educational programs that effectively meet the standard. The indicators are not intended to be used as a checklist. Quality schools will meet most but not necessarily all indicators. Indicators amplify the standard and show possible ways that a school or evaluator can demonstrate that a standard is being met. Schools are encouraged to expand upon the indicators to emphasize unique characteristics of the school.

7

Standards for Accreditation

1. PHILOSOPHY, MISSION AND GOALS
2. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP
3. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING
4. FINANCES
5. FACILITIES
6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION
7. HEALTH AND SAFETY
8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
9. ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING
10. STUDENT SERVICES
11. STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES
12. INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY

8

Projects

Significant Accreditation Projects

- Self Study
- Four Manuals
 - Parent/Student Manual
 - Faculty Manual
 - Administrative Manual
 - Curriculum Guide
- School Improvement Plan

9


Faculty Preparation

Approved Listed on the 1999-2003 AACSB National Faculty Directory (NFD)	Emerging Eighty percent of teachers use AACSB certified or have applications pending	Effective Eighty percent or more of teachers hold current AACSB teaching certificates (measured by FTE)	Exemplary One hundred percent of the teaching staff hold current AACSB certificates
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10

AACS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

By Jeff Walton



11

AACS

PRE-CONSULTATIVE VISIT REPORT

Instructions for School: This is the form that the AACs consultant will use to generate the report for your school. Enter information ONLY in the text boxes identified for "School Comment. In those text boxes, provide information about each highlighted indicator in a few sentences or a short paragraph. Do not mark the checkboxes. The consultant will be marking the checkboxes and completing the report based on documentation you provide (requested in the accompanying memo), interviews, and observations at the school. This report covers only a small portion of the indicators of quality at a school, but does provide a framework for the consultant to discuss with school leadership some of the major components of the school improvement and accreditation process. You are to provide a digital copy of this document with your responses in the "School Comment" text boxes to the consultant BEFORE the school visit begins. Please email to the consultant at least three days prior to the scheduled visit.

STANDARD 1. PHILOSOPHY, MISSION AND GOALS

- Yes No Does the school publish a statement of faith (Faculty Manual, Parent/Student Manual, or other documents) that is in agreement with the AACS statement of faith?
- Yes No Does the school articulate its Christian identity in a published philosophy statement?
- Yes No Does the school have a published mission statement?
- Yes No Does the school publicly promote its Christian identity?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 2. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- Yes No Does the school operate under a constitution and by-laws? (may be a church constitution for a church ministry)
- Yes No Does the school or church ministry have a 501(c)(3) determination document?
- Yes No Does the school have a published non-discriminatory admissions policy?
- Yes No Does the school have a clearly-established governance structure?
- Yes No Does school governance and leadership document requirements for legal operation (state and local) and is the school compliant with those requirements?
- Non-discriminatory school enrollment policies (meeting IRS from 5578 requirements)
 - Non-discriminatory staff hiring policies
 - Staff pay and benefits compliant with equal pay/equal work laws

- Fire marshal and health inspections if required by state or local law for school use or food preparation
- State requirements regarding number of school days, length of school days, required classes, graduation requirements, and clock hours expected for high school credit

Yes No Does school governance exercise fiscal oversight and an advice or consent function regarding major policy?

Yes No Does the school have an organizational structure that clearly defines lines of authority?

Yes No Do school leaders (administrator and principals) have appropriate AACSB certification?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 3. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Consultant: Review the Accreditation Manual Instructions regarding School Improvement Planning with school leadership. While the SIP document is to be completed AFTER initial accreditation, the school is collecting the data needed to profile the school and identifying initiatives for improvement as they conduct their self-study.

STANDARD 4. FINANCES

Yes No Did the school provide a financial report for the prior fiscal year for your review?

Yes No Did the school provide a budget for the current fiscal year for your review?

Yes No Do the financial report and budget indicate stability and sustainability and suggest that the school has the resources for effective and continued education of children?

Yes No Describe internal controls and separation of duties. Are internal controls and separation of financial duties adequate to protect school resources from mismanagement or theft? Do internal controls and separation of duties demonstrate an awareness of best practices for small organizations?

Yes No Does school governance and leadership regularly review financial statements (at least once each quarter)? Does school governance approve the annual budget and financial report?

Yes No Does the school conduct a periodic financial review or audit done by an outside CPA or reviewer?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 5. FACILITIES

- Yes No Does the school facility appear to meet reasonable expectations for student safety? Note any safety issues observed during your visit.
- Yes No Do play areas appear adequate and free of safety/health hazards?
- Yes No Does the school conduct fire inspections as required by state or local code? If no inspection is required, did the school provide supporting documentation? (Documentation might be either authoritative statements indicating that no inspection is required or statements describing facilities that require inspections excluding the school facility.)
- Yes No Does the school conduct health inspections as required by state or local code? If no inspection is required, did the school provide supporting documentation?
- Yes No Is the school compliant with AHERA?
- Yes No Are hazardous materials (cleaning supplies, laboratory chemicals) appropriately locked and protected?
- Yes No Do buildings and property appear to be well-maintained and clean?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION

- Yes No Is the administrative, faculty, and support staff sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to carry out the program of the school and to provide for the needs of students?
- Yes No Does the Faculty Summary report indicate that the school will be able to meet expectations for teacher preparation? (bachelor's degrees from accredited or AACSB-recognized colleges and AACSB certification)
- Yes No Are the majority of teachers currently AACSB certified? If teachers are not currently AACSB certified, please comment on the timetable and plans for applications.
- Yes No Does the school take measures to ensure that teachers are in agreement with the doctrinal statement and other policies of the school?
- Yes No Does the school maintain and adequately protect personnel records?
- Yes No Does the school have a clearly defined and non-discriminatory salary schedule?
- Yes No Do school advertisements and publications accurately portray the school?

Yes No Does the working environment for the staff provide spiritual and personal support and promote collegiality, trust and high expectations?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Yes No Does the school conduct fire and other emergency drills as required by state regulation?

Yes No Is there evidence that the school is aware of and complies with legal reporting requirements for suspected child abuse?

Yes No Is pedestrian and vehicle movement on the property carefully managed to protect student safety?

Yes No Has the school developed a crisis management plan and trained staff to implement the plan?

Yes No Has the school developed a blood-borne pathogens control plan and does the school provide the required annual training?

Yes No Does the school have in place appropriate hazard response policies (Hazard Communication Standard Training)?

Yes No Does the school observe state-mandated immunization policies for students?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Yes No Does the school program include appropriately sequenced instruction in biblical studies, language arts and literature, mathematics, science, and history?

Yes No Does the school program include appropriately sequenced instruction in visual and performing arts, health, world languages, and physical education?

Yes No Does the school meet applicable requirements regarding attendance, length of school year, length of school day, and contact hours for high school credit?

Yes No Do graduation requirements meet or exceed state guidelines?

- Yes No Has the school begun development of the Curriculum Guide (as described in the Accreditation Manual) for at least one subject? [Consultant: Discuss this requirement thoroughly with school leadership.]

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 9. ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING

- Yes No Is student progress reported to parents by means of grade cards or progress reports or online systems during and at the conclusion of every grading period?
- Yes No Are grading policies communicated to families (handbooks, website, or other means)?
- Yes No Are standardized tests administered annually (or more frequently) to measure student progress?
- Yes No Is there evidence that students learn and perform at expected levels or that interventions occur for students who are not learning at expected levels?
- Yes No Are standardized test results communicated to families?
- Yes No Are student records maintained and appropriately protected?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 10. STUDENT SERVICES

- Yes No Does the school appear to work with parents and extend student services to identify and meet the spiritual, academic, social, and physical needs of students?
- Yes No Are admission procedures organized and uniform and consistent with the school's mission and purpose and Christian identity?
- Yes No Do admission procedures assess a student's ability to benefit from the school program?
- Yes No Is financial information and other parental responsibilities clearly stated in writing and made available to parents before enrollment?
- Yes No Are the school's discipline policies and dress code communicated to parents and teachers and consistent with the philosophy and mission of the school?
- Yes No Are motor vehicles operated by the school compliant with state law?

Yes No Do school policies require CDL drivers when required and do those drivers participate in a drug and alcohol testing program as required by federal law?

Yes No Do facilities, equipment, and staff for food services meet requirements?

Yes No Are required health inspections conducted for food service?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

STANDARD 11. STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

No observations related to this standard are required as part of the consultative visit.

STANDARD 12. INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Yes No Does there appear to be an adequate supply of AV and duplicating equipment for effective school operation?

Yes No Does the school library include a collection of materials that support student reading development and student research? If the school does not have a library, have school leaders reviewed the Indicators for Schools Without Libraries in the 2020 Manual?

Yes No Do teachers have access to and make use of technology resources for instruction and record-keeping?

Yes No Do students have access to technology resources and instruction that utilizes current technologies?

School Comment:

Consultant Comment:

Self-Study Plan

Self-Study Plan Information

Accreditation is primarily a vehicle for self-study and school improvement. Because AACSB is a widely recognized agency, there are compliance requirements—indicators that measure the degree to which the school meets standard expectations for providing K–12 education in the US, but the process is first intended to serve as a vehicle for school improvement. School improvement happens only when schools seriously and thoroughly approach the self-study process. School leaders should schedule the process at a pace that allows them to study their ministry thoroughly and prepare well for the team visit, generally 12–24 months. Additionally, schools must plan the self-study process so that representatives from all significant groups in the school “community” participate. School leadership must play a significant role throughout the self-study and report-writing process.

One of the first documents created must be a self-study plan. The plan does not have to be extensive (typically 2–3 pages) but provides a timeline and organizational framework for the process.

Self-Study Plan

1. The self-study plan must include the team or committee selected for each of the twelve standards. The team is responsible to review the requirements, collect the data, write the narrative, and collect the documentation required for each standard. Individuals may serve on more than one committee; and some individuals, like school leadership, may be part of many or all committees. Committees must include a variety of people who represent the school community (school leaders, church leaders, teachers, finance staff, governance representatives, and perhaps some parents or others that represent the school family). Some teams may be identical.
2. The plan must include an initial meeting schedule for each committee/team that includes at least the first scheduled meeting for each team. For many schools, the initial meeting will be a “full team” meeting where the process is described followed by “sub-committee” meetings. Most teams will meet only two or three times, but some teams, like the team for Standard 8, will likely have to meet several times.
3. The plan must include a schedule for review and approval or development of the four school manuals described in Section 7 (School Manuals) of the Accreditation Manual and a school Crisis Manual.
4. The plan must include a schedule for self-study tasks that completes the self-study report for Standards 1, 4, and 8 not later than sixty days before the scheduled team visit. Sixty days before the visit, submit Standards 1, 4, and 8 to the AACSB office for review. These reviews will determine readiness for a team visit and will allow the school to make any needed changes before the complete report is submitted to the team 30 days before the team visit. Submit the complete self-study report to the AACSB office, team chair, and team at least one month prior to the scheduled team visit.

Self-Study Plan Illustration

An illustration of team composition follows. The illustration is from a school of about 250 students that did an excellent job of engaging a range of their constituents in the self-study process and conducted a thorough and transparent process. Smaller schools will involve fewer people, in most cases. Teams of three to five are adequate for most circumstances.

AACS Teams



Team Leaders: Phil Fitzgerald,
Velma Walraven, Karen Carlock

1. *Philosophy, Mission, and Goals*
 - a. Brenda Needham
 - b. Jon Michalek
 - c. Tim Davis
2. *Governance & Leadership*
 - a. Mitchell Rogers
 - b. Phil Goldsmith
3. *School Improvement Planning*
 - a. Brenda Needham
 - b. Candace Fougere
 - c. Carla Bayless
 - d. Carol Tack
 - e. Cherie Binns
 - f. Christie Kessel
 - g. Deb Smith
 - h. Rich Amick
 - i. Tim Davis
4. *Finances*
 - a. BJ Kessel
 - b. Jack Walker
 - c. Jon Michalek
 - d. Mitchell Rogers
5. *Facilities*
 - a. Dan Smith
 - b. Deb Smith
 - c. Jon Michalek
 - d. Tom Hagsphl
6. *School Climate and Organization*
 - a. Amy Wagner
 - b. Candace Fougere
 - c. Christie Kessel
 - d. Debbie Amick
 - e. Jacquil Allen
 - f. Joy Miller
 - g. Julina Watson
 - h. Karen Black
 - i. Laura Palazzolo
 - j. Sheri Bryant
 - k. Tim Davis
7. *Health & Safety*
 - a. Cherie Binns
 - b. Christie Kessel
 - c. Jacquil Allen
 - d. Janas Richard
 - e. Karen Black
 - f. Kathy Burgess
 - g. Megan Bladine
 - h. Pachi Stender
 - i. Sheri Bryant
8. *Educational Program*
 - a. Jack Walker
 - b. Megan Bladine
 - c. Mitchell Rogers
 - d. Rich Amick
9. *Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning*
 - a. Brenda Needham
 - b. Carol Tack
 - c. Jack Walker
 - d. Karen Black
 - e. Kathy Burgess
 - f. Laura Palazzolo
 - g. Megan Bladine
 - h. Pachi Stender
 - i. Rich Amick
10. *Student Services*
 - a. Amy Wagner
 - b. Carla Bayless
 - c. Debbie Amick
 - d. Janas Richard
 - e. Joy Miller
 - f. Julina Watson
 - g. Pachi Stender
 - h. Sheri Bryant
11. *Student Life and Student Activities*
 - a. Amy Wagner
 - b. Candace Fougere
 - c. Carla Bayless
 - d. Carol Tack
 - e. Cherie Binns
 - f. Deb Smith
 - g. Debbie Amick
 - h. Jacquil Allen
 - i. Janas Richard
 - j. Joy Miller
 - k. Julina Watson
 - l. Laura Palazzolo
 - m. Tom Hagsphl
12. *Information Resources and Technology*
 - a. Jon Michalek
 - b. Mark Nowak
 - c. Tom Hagsphl

6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION

The school's organizational structure and climate facilitate spiritual and academic development and achievement of the school's mission. The environment integrates Christian faith in all aspects of the school program. The school's culture supports successful implementation of its programs for developing both students and staff. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively deliver the educational programs of the school. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative. Relationships with families and the sponsoring church and the community are positive and contribute to successful operation.

- 6.1 The school has operated effectively for a time that is sufficient to demonstrate its educational and operational continuity, stability, and effectiveness.
- 6.2 The school's design, organization, and climate support achievement of its mission.
- 6.3 Programs of study, athletics, activities, codes of conduct, and discipline policies reflect the Christian values expressed in the school's foundational documents.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.1–6.3 Narrative: insert
Observations: (team insert heading and observations at the end of any text box where needed)

- 6.4 An organizational chart or table and job descriptions specify levels of responsibility and reporting relationships.
- 6.5 The working environment for the staff provides spiritual and personal support and promotes collegiality, high expectations, trust, and recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of all staff members.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.4–6.5 Narrative: insert

PERSONNEL

- 6.6 The administrative, faculty, and support staff members are sufficient in number and are appropriately qualified to carry out the program of the school and to provide for the needs of the students.

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Insufficient faculty and/or support staff is indicated by unmet deadlines for reports and communications with parents and others in the school community, phone calls not answered or returned, visitors not promptly served, and students spending excessive amounts of time in transition or non-instructional activities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Most deadlines for reports and communications with parents and others in the school community are met. Generally, phone calls are answered or returned and visitors are promptly served. Teachers' time is consumed by clerical and functional activities that leave inadequate time for lesson preparation, instruction, and interaction with students.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	Communications and school functions are accomplished smoothly because the number of persons, hours assigned, and organization of the staff are appropriate. Teachers have adequate time for preparation, instruction, and interaction with students.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additionally, the staff includes specialists (in areas such as music, art, physical education, and technology) who complement and enrich the curriculum and the experiences of students and other staff.

6.6 Narrative: insert

6.7 Faculty members are qualified by training and experience in the areas to which they are assigned. As basic preparation, they possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university. [The accrediting agency must be recognized by the US Department of Education or the college must be recognized by the AACSB Accreditation Commission.]

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	A significant percentage of classes (more than 20% of core class hours or 30% of non-core class hours) are taught by people who do not hold bachelor's degrees.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Some teachers have bachelor's degrees from non-recognized colleges. Some class hours are taught by people who do not hold bachelor's degrees. Portfolios and resumes support the qualifications of those who do not hold bachelor's degrees.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	All teachers of core classes hold bachelor's degrees from accredited or recognized colleges. A small percentage of non-core classes (less than 30%) may be taught by teachers who do not hold approved bachelor's degrees. Portfolios and resumes support the qualifications of those who do not hold bachelor's degrees.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additionally, teachers are supported and encouraged in pursuit of graduate degrees.

6.8 Teachers have current AACSB certification. Certification helps to ensure that teachers are academically prepared and continue to develop as education professionals.

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Less than 80% of the teachers hold a current AACSB teaching certificate. [Percent compliance is measured by full-time equivalency (FTE).]
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Eighty percent of teachers are AACSB certified or have applications pending.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	Eighty percent or more of teachers hold current AACSB teaching certificates (measured by FTE).
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	More than ninety percent of the teaching staff hold current AACSB professional certificates.

6.9 School personnel are in agreement with the doctrinal statement and other general policies of the school.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.7–6.9 Narrative: insert

6.10 A comprehensive staff development program allocates suitable time and resources to enable teachers to maintain credentials and continually develop the knowledge and skills that promote quality classroom management and instruction.

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	There is no organized and ongoing professional development, though occasionally teachers participate in professional growth opportunities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	There is professional development, but it is not well-defined and there is no school-wide plan or structure.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	There is well-defined, scheduled, and structured professional development designed to meet the needs of the school and improve instruction and classroom management. The school provides or funds some professional development activities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additionally, the professional development program analyzes and addresses the needs of individual teachers or groups of teachers and the instructional programs of the school. Teachers participate in planning and producing professional development activities. All staff participate. The school provides or funds most professional development activities and assists teachers who pursue classes or advanced degrees.

6.10 Narrative: insert

- 6.11 Hiring, appointment, and termination procedures are ethical and comply with local, state, and national requirements.
- 6.12 Employment agreements are in writing, comply with local, state, and national requirements, and are honored by both parties.
- 6.13 The school defines policies and procedures that guide faculty in a document or manual that is regularly reviewed, updated as needed, and followed in practice.
- 6.14 Policies and procedures ensure a work environment that is safe and free of harassment.

Not Applicable Absent Emerging Effective Exemplary

6.11–6.14 Narrative: insert

- 6.15 The school provides assistance in preparing new and returning teachers for the school year. The school implements written procedures for orienting and mentoring new teachers.
- 6.16 An organized faculty meeting time is scheduled for the administration to communicate with the faculty.

Not Applicable Absent Emerging Effective Exemplary

6.15–6.16 Narrative: insert

- 6.17 The school maintains complete and accurate personnel records as required by law, including professional qualifications and credentials. These records are protected against loss by fire and theft and are available only to authorized persons.
- 6.18 Salaries are based on training, experience, extra duty, expertise, commitment, and merit. The salary schedule is clearly defined by the school and understood by the faculty. Salaries meet the guidelines set by the federal and state equal employment opportunity acts. The school has an established salary scale. A benefits schedule has been developed, describing what benefits are available and who qualifies for the various benefits.

Not Applicable Absent Emerging Effective Exemplary

6.17–6.18 Narrative: insert

- 6.19 The school has a procedure for recruiting new faculty and staff, screening and interviewing candidates, verifying philosophy, and providing applicants with necessary information about the school. Criteria include an assessment of the candidate's understanding of and commitment to the foundational beliefs and mission of the school.

Not Applicable Absent Emerging Effective Exemplary

6.19 Narrative: insert

6.20 The school has a procedure for the evaluation of faculty performance that is carried out in an ethical manner. The procedure provides a basis for decisions about the individual's performance and is clearly understood by members of the faculty. Criteria include an assessment of the teacher's understanding of and commitment to the foundational beliefs and mission of the school. (An annual or periodic evaluation is not the same as a classroom observation, although it is certainly informed by classroom observations. See indicator 6.21 regarding classroom observations.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	No formal evaluation of faculty and staff is evident.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Administrative evaluations of faculty and staff occur but are not consistent, uniform, and based on clearly communicated and understood criteria.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	Annual evaluations take place and are based on clearly communicated and understood criteria. Personnel records include copies of annual evaluations. Retention and separation decisions are based significantly on written evaluations that are shared with the employee.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additionally, staff participate in self-evaluations and there is evidence that evaluations influence professional development activities.

6.21 The school's supervision programs provide direction and guidance for teachers. Formal and informal classroom observations inform decisions made by supervisors and provide instructional support.

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Formal observations of classroom teaching do not occur.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Informal observations of classroom teaching are common, but formal observations are irregular.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	Informal observations of classroom teaching are common. The program for formal observations includes at least one planned observation of experienced teachers by an administrator or supervisor. Inexperienced or struggling teachers are more frequently observed. Formal observations are followed by a meeting and/or written feedback.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additional formal observations take place. These may be administrative or peer-to-peer observations. Observations are formative and are followed by conferences intended for feedback and discussion.

6.20–6.21 Narrative: insert

6.22 Teachers develop and supervisors review daily lesson plans.

<input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Lesson plans are not regularly completed or submitted for supervisor review.
<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging	Lesson plans are submitted for review every week.
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	Additionally, lesson plans follow a uniform format and include a lesson objective, learning activities, resources, and assessments/checks for understanding.
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	Additionally, lesson plans tie lessons to the core objectives identified in the school's curriculum guide.

6.22 Narrative: insert

RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITY

6.23 The school understands its role within the total church ministry (if applicable) and works to enhance all aspects of the church ministry. The school also endeavors to maintain a good relationship with other churches in the general school community.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.23 Narrative: insert

- 6.24 Families are viewed as an important source of information and insights about students. Parents are well informed as to the purposes, objectives, and procedures of the school. The school informs the parents of school events and programs. Procedures are available whereby parents may express their concerns and interests to school personnel.
- 6.25 The school demonstrates a good testimony among other Christian schools in the community. The school is a benefit to the community.
- 6.26 Any parent organization or booster club operates as an integral part of the overall school program and is under the direct supervision of the school administration. Its purpose and operating procedures must be communicated in written form to the entire school family.
- 6.27 The administration communicates the procedures parents should follow for communicating with students during the school day.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.24–6.27 Narrative: insert

- 6.28 The school’s publications present an accurate description of its organization, staff, program, and facilities. Publications and advertisements adhere to legal and ethical standards.

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
6.28 Narrative: insert

Commendations, Major Recommendations, Progress Recommendations, and Suggestions for Standard 6: School Climate and Organization Commendations: insert Major Recommendations: insert Progress Recommendations: insert Suggestions: insert

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Absent <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Effective <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary
Team Rating for Standard 6: School Climate and Organization Rationale for a rating of “Emerging” or “Absent”: insert

CURRICULUM GUIDE

The purpose of the curriculum guide should be to serve as a practical guide for the curriculum created by the staff. The curriculum guide may be expanded as new policies and procedures are developed. Other categories may be added as desired. It is wise to index the manual in such a way that policy can be added or deleted.

A MODEL FOR CURRICULUM GUIDE DEVELOPMENT

The big message in all this is that buying textbooks and other curricular material is not the same thing as building a guaranteed and viable curriculum for a Christian school. ... [A] 'guaranteed' curriculum assures that specific content is taught in specific courses and at specific grade levels....A 'viable' curriculum assures that sufficient instructional time is available to provide each student with an opportunity to learn what's being taught....A study conducted by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officials, and Achieve, Inc. (2008, cited in DuFour and Marzano, 2011) found that countries with high performance scores on international tests limit the topics students are expected to learn and organize the curriculum around standards that are focused, rigorous, and coherent. Contrast this practice with what's happening in the United States (and in our Christian schools), where state standards address a large number of topics at each grade level. The study concluded, 'U.S. schools therefore end up using curricula that are a mile wide and an inch deep.' [Earwood, E., & Suiter, P. (2012). *A Scent of Water: Bringing Life Back to the Christian School Movement*. Greenville, SC: Emerald House.]

A quality school places a high priority on a carefully structured instructional program and the documentation that guides the instructional program. The professionals on the school staff recognize that purchasing textbooks and other materials is not equivalent to developing a curriculum for the school's instructional program. Textbooks and curriculum materials are important tools for teaching the curriculum of the school. Effective schools develop a site-specific curriculum guide that describes the course of study at the school, helps to ensure continuity across grade levels as a subject is taught, identifies core competencies, and provides a basis for evaluating student and school success.

An effective curriculum guide is based on sound research regarding students and learning, is clearly organized, is developed and regularly reviewed and revised as a collaborative effort of the school's professionals, describes the instructional program in language that is understandable to teachers and students and parents, and is a usable tool for teachers.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR EACH SUBJECT

1. A philosophy statement of one or two pages describing the biblical foundations for teaching the subject in a Christian school. Statements should be biblically supported. Suggested resource: Horton, R. (2017). *Handbook of Christian Education*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press.
2. Scope and sequence documents for the subject K5–12. Scope and sequence charts may be divided into other divisions, for instance K5–6th and 7th–12th depending on the organization of the school but must show the horizontal alignment across at least a division of the school.
3. A curriculum map that identifies core learning objectives for the subject at each grade level, maps those core learning objectives to the school's textbooks and instructional materials, and (for exemplary schools) includes a pacing guide and a column mapping the core learning objectives to assessments.

MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM GUIDES REQUIRED FOR AACCS ACCREDITATION

Schools that have developed curriculum guides using earlier models recommended by the AACCS accreditation process are *not* required to revise their materials to fit the current model. They may continue to develop and update curriculum guide components using the model they followed for initial development. Schools that are new to the process *must* use the current model and schools that have curriculum guides following older models are encouraged to consider revising to the new model as they go through a cycle of curriculum guide update and revision.

Schools wishing to adopt a model for their curriculum guide that differs from the model presented *must* communicate with either their team chair or the AACCS office and secure written approval before working on curriculum guide development using an alternative model. The alternative model *must* include at least the three required elements.

Any effective model for developing the curriculum guide for a school will involve the entire range of those who teach, supervise, and administrate in the school. Administrators and supervisors will identify resources, models, and templates and will coordinate opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively on development of the documents for the school. If teachers are given the opportunity to work collaboratively, their sense of professionalism and collegiality will grow, they will take ownership of the curriculum guides, and the product will be usable for them and others who might follow them in their classrooms. If the documents are produced by administrators or if teachers work in isolation, the curriculum guides are much less likely to have value to the teachers who will use them and teachers and their students will not reap the benefits that will result if curriculum guides are developed through a collaborative process. For the purposes of documenting the collaborative effort, a record of meetings and a description of the collaborative process should be maintained and included with self-study documentation.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The first project in this model is development of a philosophy statement of one or two pages. Like the philosophy of education document for the school, this document frames the foundational thoughts for why and how a subject is to be taught in a Christian school [Suggested resource for this project: Horton, R. (2017). *Handbook of Christian Education*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press. Suggested resource for science philosophy statement project: Mangalwadi, V. (2011). *The Book That Made Your World, Chapter 13*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson]. A draft of the philosophy statement might be written by the department chair or another teacher assigned this task; but before the statement is finalized, all subject teachers and supervisors and administrators should have the opportunity to review the statement and contribute to refining it.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE CHARTS

The second project in this model is the development of scope and sequence charts. Scope and sequence charts identify the breadth (scope) of the subject at each grade level and the order (sequence) in which it will be taught. Most text publishers provide a scope and sequence for the content of the materials that they publish. This document is a good starting place for a school, but quality schools will not merely copy the publisher's document. They will produce a document that reflects the actual content of the course as taught at their school. They will incorporate additional content and may omit content. Scope and sequence charts typically begin with the identification of major themes (strands). Under each strand, lesser themes (sub-strands) are identified. Sometimes, significant topics are identified under sub-strands, but this level of detail is rare in a scope and sequence chart that maps a subject for grades K–12. The focus must be restricted to the strands and sub-strands or the chart will become too extensive to be a useful overview.

- The supervisor or department leader who will direct the development of the scope and sequence chart should be very familiar with scope and sequence documents. This may require some research and study.
- The leader assembles resources (such as the publisher’s scope and sequence, other scope and sequence documents, or state standards) and produces the template to be used by the school.
- All teachers who instruct the subject meet (either K5–12 or in divisions as determined by the school). Each teacher should bring all course resources to the meetings for reference. Meetings of two hours are most effective and generally a scope and sequence chart can be completed in just one or two two-hour meetings if the leader/facilitator has prepared the templates and resources or models for consideration.
- Teachers examine resources and identify strands.
- Teachers examine resources and identify sub-strands.
- Teachers examine resources and may identify a very limited number of significant topics under some sub-strands. An expanded list is not necessary or helpful and will distract from the focus of the scope and sequence.
- Teachers evaluate sub-strands and topics and mark the scope and sequence chart at each grade level where that sub-strand or topic is taught. A significant additional benefit will be gained if teachers evaluate and discuss and mark each grade level with a letter indicating the degree of mastery anticipated during that year. Suggested markings are I-introduce, D-develop, M-master, and R-Review.
- As the school’s scope and sequence chart for a subject develops, the group of teachers developing the document must evaluate: (1) Is the scope of instruction too broad?—omit content. (2) Is the scope missing important elements?—add content. (3) Is the sequence appropriate?—move content.

[See Accreditation Resources on the AACCS website.]

CORE COMPETENCY OBJECTIVES

The third project in this model is identification of core competency objectives. This project is, arguably, the most challenging and most important project in curriculum guide development. The Christian philosophy for teaching the subject was developed earlier in this model to provide guidance and a foundation for this step. Note that only core competency objectives will be identified during this project. *The purpose is not to develop instructional objectives for every unit or chapter or lesson, but to identify a set of core competency objectives that will provide the framework for focused instruction and assessment and continuity in the school’s instructional program. Avoid the temptation to create an expansive list of core competency objectives. An expanded list will increase the number of pages in the curriculum guide but will do little to focus instruction and assessment or create a usable guide. It is more challenging to be concise than to be expansive. Greater care must be exercised in the selection and development and future revision of core competency objectives, but the result will be a document that focuses on a carefully selected set of competencies and that helps teachers do the same—an important piece in developing a curriculum that has depth and rigor rather than the “mile wide and inch deep” approach that characterizes many schools. While identifying a target number is difficult, keep in mind that identifying a smaller number requires greater care and produces greater focus. The number selected should be at least fifteen and no more than fifty.* The nature of the class will influence the number of core competencies.

- Leadership begins this process by identifying at least three professionally developed sets of learning standards for review. The state learning standards should be one of the sets included for review. Other possibilities include the standards identified in the Supplemental Content Classification Guide for the Iowa Assessments, the standards produced by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), or the standards produced by the National Council for Teachers of Science. Each set has advantages. Examining and considering state standards helps a school accurately answer questions regarding its curriculum alignment with state standards and assists students entering and leaving the school. Standards produced by professional organizations such as NCTM are produced by subject experts. The standards identified in the Iowa Supplemental Content Classification Guide are simply stated and broadly based (developed by cross-referencing multiple sets of standards). An additional advantage of using the Iowa Supplemental Classification Guide standards is the natural connection to assessment for schools that are using the Iowa Assessments. For simplicity and continuity, after reviewing several, leadership should select one set to serve as a baseline set for helping to identify the school's core competency objectives. An additional benefit of these professionally developed standards is that most are already written as student learning objectives, identifying learning in terms of an action the student will take that provides evidence that learning has happened (an action verb and a learning performance statement).
- Leadership meets with teachers to identify the baseline set of standards and describe the process of identifying or developing core competency objectives for the school. The process of identifying objectives must be collaborative and must involve every teacher who teaches that subject if the process is to be effective and meaningful. Meetings must include all subject teachers in the school or a division of the school (lower elementary, middle school, high school) as appropriate to the school. Each teacher is given a copy of the baseline set of standards and assigned the task of identifying a given number (typically 15–50) of core competency objectives for each grade he/she teaches.
- Leadership then meets with teachers in a series of meetings in which the objectives identified by individual teachers are discussed, charted, and revised. A record of meetings and an outline of the process should be kept for self-study documentation.
 1. A good first step is for the group to review each objective intentionally for conformity to the school's biblical philosophy and educational purpose. Some of this consideration will naturally take place at earlier stages in the process, but intentional review should take place.
 2. A good second step is to create a chart (central column of a curriculum map) of the core objectives. The visual will allow teachers to identify areas of overlapping objectives and overlooked objectives. In this process, objectives may be rejected or moved to other years and new objectives may be identified and added to the chart (map). Language will be changed, and objectives will be modified to fit your Christian school curriculum. Some core objectives will be repeated from year to year, but the process of discussion will help teachers determine when a core objective should be introduced to the chart and when it should no longer be included. Remember in this process that the goal is to identify a set of core competency objectives—brief, understandable, and focused. The process of weeding out and refining will be challenging but will benefit teachers and students. Together with developing the scope and sequence, this process will help teachers (1) understand the sequence of topics and skills and (2) determine the degree to which those topics and skills should be emphasized in class.
 3. A good third step is for the group to compare the chart of core objectives to the scope and sequence chart developed earlier. This comparison will align the two documents. In the

process, changes may be made to both documents. When this review process is complete, the core competency objectives and the scope and sequence should clearly align.

4. A brief set of core biblical integration principles (3–5), expressed as student learning objectives, should then be written for each grade. This should also be a collaborative exercise. These core principles will likely be repeated, with some modification, from one grade to another. While the biblical principles are foundational and could be considered first in this process, teachers who are inexperienced with writing student learning objectives will likely understand the form better after the extensive review of correctly stated core competency objectives.
5. The final document can then be produced, listing biblical integration objectives and core competency objectives at each grade level. The final document might be a list or a chart that allows visual reference of the continuity of core objectives. The AACPS curriculum guide project requires only a two-column map—the primary column is complete when core objectives are charted.

CURRICULUM MAPS

The final curriculum guide project is completion of a two-column curriculum map. While curriculum maps may be multi-column and very complex, all that is required for an *effective* rating for this project in the AACPS accreditation process is a two-column map, the two columns are the core of any curriculum map. Column 1 was completed in the previous step when core competency objectives (standards) and biblical integration objectives were identified. In Column 2 (activities/resources), teachers map the school's learning standards to textbook pages or lessons and other resources that will be used for instruction.

Exemplary schools will “close the instructional loop” by tying identified objectives to assessment mechanisms and by establishing a pacing guide to help teachers understand when core competency objectives should be taught during a school year. This is *not* required for the AACPS accreditation process, but it is required for an *exemplary* rating on the rubrics related to this project. Mapping to assessment mechanisms will require adding a third column to the map. This column is typically added to the right of the activities/resources column. In the assessment column, mechanisms used to assess student mastery of each standard are listed (tests, projects, activities). Adding a pacing guide to the curriculum map will require adding a fourth column to the map, typically added on the left side of the map. In the pacing guide column, time elements are identified that help the teacher understand when this core competency objective is addressed in the school year and how much time is devoted to the study. Most often, notations include an indicator of the place during the school year (first quarter, fourth week) and of the amount of time devoted (3 lessons, 1 day).

For schools that follow a standards-based model of instruction, a thoughtfully developed curriculum map is essential. For schools that follow a textbook-based model of instruction, a thoughtfully developed curriculum map is less critical but still very beneficial in helping teachers understand what will be taught, the order in which skills will be taught, and the amount of emphasis needed to teach that skill at each grade level as a child progresses through the course of study at a school.

One further note about curriculum maps—like core competency objectives, they must be focused on the major ideas and projects that drive a class rather than mapping every topic. Extensive maps or outlines unnecessarily consume time and energy and rob the exercise of one of its principle benefits: the focus on the key elements or core competencies. A typical curriculum map for a subject at a grade level will be three to five pages of material. If the school limits the number of core objectives to not more than fifty, this helpful focus can be more easily obtained.

PREPARATION FOR AN ACCREDITATION TEAM

When final approval is granted for an accreditation team to visit the applicant school, the team will be selected by the AACS education director or the team chair and approved by the school. The accreditation team is comprised of five to seven experienced educators (depending upon the size of the school) who have administrative, supervisory, or teaching experience. The majority of the accreditation team must have previous experience as accreditation team members. Team members should possess backgrounds and experience in the areas evaluated.

The school must have completed the school manuals, self-study, and all required documents.

The AACS education director will establish the evaluation dates in coordination with the school administrator and accreditation team chairperson.

The administrator of the applicant school shall accomplish several tasks:

- Sixty days before the scheduled team visit, the school shall digitally submit the self-study reports for Standards 1, 4, and 8 to the AACS office for evaluation. The team visit may be postponed at this time if the submitted report portions do not demonstrate readiness for a team visit.
- The school shall complete the self-study report and follow the guidelines for digital submission in preparing the report for submitting the report to the AACS office, team chair, and team.
- Thirty days before the scheduled team visit, the school shall digitally submit a copy of the completed self-study and supporting documents to the education director of the American Association of Christian Schools, the team chair, and all team members.
- Lodging for team members is arranged by the applicant school.

One hard copy of the self-study report and one hard copy of policy manuals and curriculum guide must also be available to the accreditation team members when they arrive on site.

When the accreditation team arrives at the applicant school, there will be established expectations:

A room will be provided for the team as the general headquarters. The room must provide adequate space for the team to work *in privacy*. At least two six-foot tables are required for team member work space.

The Administrator's Report

An orientation session will be scheduled, at which time the team meets with the school administrator and selected others. The administrator will give a brief report to the team and provide a tour of the facility.

The administrator's report will include a brief profile of the school, a brief history of the school, the current status of the school, brief description of the philosophy of school ministry to the church and community, and a brief description of any significant plans for improvement to the program or facility. The report should not take more than 10 minutes. No written report is required.

The following materials should be available in the accreditation team's headquarters:

1. Office supplies: letter-size notepads, pens, stapler, paper clips, post-it notes
2. Master schedule of classes
3. Samples of printed materials, communications, and newspaper articles
4. Daily schedule for each teacher with time frames; include academic and non-academic activities (1 hard copy for each team member)

5. Copy of most recent fire marshal inspection report
6. AHERA asbestos program management plan
7. Copy of fire and tornado drill record (Include date, time of day, minutes/seconds to evacuate the building or prepare for tornado.)
8. Copy of most recent health inspection
9. Copy of school's Crisis Management Plan
10. Drug and alcohol random testing program information (for CDL drivers)
11. Blank progress report
12. Blank report card
13. Blood-borne pathogen training program information
14. Hazard communication plan
15. Self-study report (1 hard copy)
16. Administrative manual (1 copy)
17. Student/parent manual (2 copies)
18. Faculty manual (2 copies)
19. Curriculum guide (1 copy)

The administrator should ensure that instruction and student learning activities are taking place during the days the accreditation team members are scheduled to visit classrooms. The team will want to observe instruction and a variety of learning activities during classroom observations. Teachers must be prepared for observation during the times marked for classroom observations on the team visit schedule.

The administrator should ensure that all accreditation team expenses and honorariums are paid by the time of departure from the evaluation visit.

Accreditation Team (Tentative Schedule) Three-Day Visit

Sample Christian School, City, State, Dates (include year)

First Day

9:00 a.m.	Team meets to identify areas of focus for the day, assign interviews and observations
10:00 a.m.	Principal's meeting and tour of facility
11:00 a.m.	Begin task of interviewing, visiting classrooms, and verification
12:00 p.m.	Lunch on campus
12:30 p.m.	Continue interviewing, visiting classrooms, and verification
3:15 p.m.	Team meets to assess progress
3:30 p.m.	Team meets with faculty approximately 15 minutes after dismissal bell rings (one hour)
5:30 p.m.	Dinner (1)
7:00 p.m.	Church Service (if applicable)
8:30 p.m.	Team meets if needed to discuss progress

Second Day

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast at the school or hotel
7:45 a.m.	Team meets to identify focus areas for the day, including classroom visits and interviews
8:15 a.m.	Continue verification, classroom visits, and interviews; work on writing the report
8:30 a.m.	Parent Focus Group Interview (4–10 parents, 20 minutes). Alternatively, school may choose to schedule this focus group for the end of the school day. Please inform the team chair if the afternoon time for this group is selected.
9:30 a.m.	Interview with pastor
10:00 a.m.	Interview with bookkeeper or CFO
11:00 a.m. (?)	Fire Drill
12:00 p.m.	Lunch on campus
12:45 p.m.	Team meets to assess progress; classroom visits and as many interviews as possible; begin final report
1:00 p.m.	Teacher interviews begin [4 teachers (lower elementary, upper elementary, JH, SH), 10 minutes each]—may schedule two at the same time, but not more than two
4:00 p.m.	Discuss interviews. Determine team's progress in report writing.
5:30 p.m.	Dinner (2)
7:00 p.m.	Team members finish report sections as much as possible

Third Day

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast at the hotel or school
- 8:00 a.m. Team meets to identify focus for day
- 8:15 a.m. Continue verification and final report writing. Written reports should be complete by 11:30 a.m.
- 9:00 a.m. Student interviews (2 groups [middle school, high school], 15-minute intervals)
- 10:00 a.m. Final report writing
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch on campus [Notice the earlier time for lunch on this day.]
- 12:00 noon Team completes school rating form and identifies commendations and recommendations for exit conference
- 2:00 p.m. Exit Conference with accreditation team and school leadership team
- 2:30 p.m. Team wraps up work. Team is free to leave if final reports have been written and submitted (digital copy) to the chair; if not, the team continues working until completed. All members stay until all reports are approved by the chair.
- Dinner (1): The team chair will take the team to dinner and submit a receipt to the school for reimbursement; OR a school leader may take the team to dinner; OR dinner may be served to the team at the school. Please let the team chair know what is planned.
- Dinner (2): School leadership may take the team to dinner or provide dinner at the school. This is a good opportunity for the team to connect informally with the school leadership team. School leadership may invite the pastor, principals, and lead teachers, and board members if desired. Please let the team chair know what is planned.

6 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION

The leadership of the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) has always been committed to quality. The accreditation program has always had as one of its major goals the improvement of the processes involved in implementing and carrying out a quality education program. There has always been a concern for improving the product—the graduates of the schools. There has always been the understanding that accreditation is not a plateau to be achieved. Rather it is a commitment to improvement, a commitment which can only be carried out as attention is given to general school improvement. Since accreditation is viewed as a process requiring a commitment on the part of school leadership and the faculty, this plan will guide a school administrator and a school faculty as they continue to work on general school improvement.

Even the most casual observer of the education scene in our nation realizes the attention that is being given to improving schools. Those involved in private Christian school education can benefit from both the failures and the successes that have been experienced over the past years. We know that there is a need to commit to general school improvement in private Christian school education and to work to improve the general quality of schools within the movement.

Accreditation is not the end; it is the beginning of a continuous improvement process. Persons committed to the private Christian education movement should have no problem committing to general school improvement and in working to make this movement an even more glowing testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Such commitment is vital for the ministry of Christian school education.

Consequently, school improvement is viewed as an integral part of the accreditation process and an extension of the self-study process.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The key element in school improvement planning is people. People form a school's culture. School improvement is the process whereby a strong school leader, working with the faculty and other constituent groups, works to improve the culture in which education takes place.

Several things are relevant to the school improvement process:

Effective school improvement demands strong leadership, vested in the school administrator who has a passion for the ministry of Christian education and high expectations for the ministry of the school.

Effective school improvement is best carried out at the school building level, including, to some degree, all those people involved in operating an educational program. The key element in school improvement is people, and the key ingredients in Christian education are people of integrity, of positive attitude, of loyalty, and of commitment to the Christian faith and to educational professionalism. Attention must be given to establishing and maintaining those changes deemed desirable in the culture of the school.

Effective school improvement will be based on an accurate assessment a school with regard to development or growth. This requires a complete and accurate profile of the school currently in all aspects of its operations.

Effective school improvement will grow logically out of what the school defines as its philosophy, its general goals, and its mission.

Effective school improvement will be informed by a research-based, data-driven plan that identifies where the school is and where the leadership and the faculty desire the school to be in five years. The plan must always

be current and continuous. The plan will specifically identify target areas for improvement and will assign both responsibilities and timelines. The plan will also identify the means by which progress toward the target areas will be assessed.

School improvement should be the goal of every leader of a private Christian school. Our responsibility to God and to our constituents demands this.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND THE SELF-STUDY

The AACSB self-study process for accreditation is designed to follow the general model for organizational improvement. The self-study team, led by the school leader, evaluates the school in light of the twelve standards and indicators of quality. They collect data through the self-study process that helps them to evaluate. They identify strengths and weaknesses and propose initiatives for school improvement.

School improvement planning generally consists of five components: (1) developing or reviewing and affirming foundational statements, (2) profiling the school by collecting data, (3) identifying strengths and weaknesses, (4) consultation or peer review, and (5) developing strategic initiatives.

Through the self-study process, the school accomplishes components 1–3. The accreditation team visit accomplishes component 4. Following the team visit, the school accomplishes component 5 by creating a school improvement plan document that includes major recommendations and progress recommendations provided by the accreditation team, and a chart of strategic initiatives developed by school leadership.

WRITING STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The self-study committee should be instrumental in developing strategies for addressing the weaknesses of the school. Strategic initiatives may address curriculum, instruction, staff development, financial resources, technology, parent partnerships, and perhaps other things. The total staff of the school should be involved in writing strategic initiatives, particularly those directly affected by the statement. Involvement will only enhance the possibility of the effort being accepted and implemented.

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The school improvement plan for AACSB accreditation is submitted with the first annual report following the team visit and approval by the Commission. The plan must include three elements.

1. A matrix of responses to all Major Recommendations.
2. A matrix of responses to all Progress Recommendations.
3. A matrix of school-developed Strategic Initiatives.

Regarding school-developed strategic initiatives, schools may develop as many initiatives as they choose for internal purposes but must select not more than five significant initiatives for focus and reporting.

School-developed initiatives must address at least one of these three.

- (1) Creating and/or implementing a coherent curriculum.
- (2) Promoting authentic literacy: reading, writing, and speaking effectively.
- (3) Developing soundly structured instruction.

[Templates for the SIP and matrix are available in Accreditation Resources on the AACSB website.]

CONCLUSION

School improvement is never completed. Just as believers are challenged to strive for perfection, administrators and teachers should strive to improve schools as resources and abilities permit. Perfection will never be attained, but excellence should be the goal. The Christian education movement is a testimony to those outside the body of Christ. Those involved in the movement must strive for excellence. To do less is inexcusable to ourselves and to God, whom we serve.



School Improvement Matrix

School Name: Sample Christian School

City: Anytown

State: ST

Administrator: Sam Principal

Report Date: Year 1—9/8/20 Year 2—9/7/21 Year 3—9/6/22 Year 4—9/5/23 Year 5—_____

1. Each year next to the appropriate year, add the new actions taken for school improvement. Do not remove previous comments/actions. The matrix provides a history of actions on your strategic initiatives.
2. **The last column is for AACCS office use only;** The school improvement matrix will be returned to you after staff review.

*School-developed initiatives must address at least one of these three: (1) Creating and/or implementing a coherent curriculum. (2) Promoting authentic literacy: reading, writing, and speaking effectively. (3) Developing soundly structured instruction.

*Strategic Initiative 1	Statement of Initiative	Review the curriculum guide to align with the Iowa standardized test. [This fulfills "creating a coherent curriculum" requirement.]	For AACCS Staff Review ONLY. DO NOT MARK this column.
	Timeline	One subject/year; 4 years. (Math, Language Arts, History, Science)	
	Leader	Mrs. N. Structor (assistant principal)	
	Assessment Criteria	CG revision complete	
	Needed Resources/ Projected Investment	Iowa standards; time (monthly department meetings of affected teachers and department head)	
	Annual Progress Report	Year 1—We completed the alignment for the math curriculum guide. This led to purchasing supplemental materials for upper elementary math (teaching graphs).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
		Year 2—We completed the alignment for the social studies/history CG.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
	Year 3—We completed the alignment for ELA.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
	Year 4—	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
	Year 5—	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	



**School Improvement
Matrix**

*Strategic Initiative 2	Statement of Initiative	Establish the practice of teaching soundly structured lessons in every class. [This fulfills "develop soundly structured instruction" requirement.]	For AACCS Staff Review ONLY. DO NOT MARK this column.
	Timeline	Year 1—Professional development and training Year 2—Implementation of standard lesson plans & procedures and peer observations Year 3—Assessment and revision Year 4+—Continued implementation & evaluation	
	Leader	Mrs. M. Hunter, elementary supervisor	
	Assessment Criteria	Year 2—Supervisor weekly review of lesson plans, peer observations and faculty focus group Year 3—Comparison of yearly progress for a selected sample of students using standard scores from Year 0 and Year 2	
	Needed Resources/ Projected Investment	Year 1—\$1,000 or onsite professional development; Staff time for PD and training during scheduled staff meetings Year 2—Staff time for peer observations; \$1,000 for substitute pay during peer observations	
	Annual Progress Report	Year 1—Completed PD and 4 staff meeting trainings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
		Year 2—Implemented Hunter Model lesson plans. Conducted 3 cycles of peer observations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
Year 3—Continued implementation. Conducted end-of-year assessment of annual growth for 50 students using standard scores for ELA and math from Year 0 and Year 2. Observed noticeable improvement for elementary and middle school students but no significant change for high school students. Will focus on and discuss lesson plans and instruction with high school instructors.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
Year 4—		<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
	Year 5—	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
*Strategic Initiative 3	Statement of Initiative	Improve safety for students crossing road between buildings during school day.	For AACCS Staff Review ONLY. DO NOT MARK this column.
	Timeline	Fall 2024	
	Leader	Mr. C. Cure (buildings and grounds maintenance)	



**School Improvement
Matrix**

	Assessment Criteria	Safety measures installed	
	Needed Resources/ Projected Investment	City approval; TBD, may include: flashing signs, crossing guards, speed limit signs, speed bumps? \$10,000	
	Annual Progress Report	Year 1—We met with the local police and the commissioners multiple times. Their first concession was to lower the speed limit. Signs were installed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
		Year 2—We met again with the city commission. They approved flashing lights if we paid for them.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
		Year 3—Flashing lights were installed (local businessman donated funds).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.
Year 4—Police officer is on duty during pick-up & drop-off. School staff act as crossing guards when students cross before/after class. Parent volunteers act as crossing guards following school events. We feel that these measures are adequate. Year 5—		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequate annual info. <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate annual info.; provide more info next year.	
*Strategic Initiative 4	Statement of Initiative	Improve instructional technology use by teachers.	For AACCS Staff Review ONLY. DO NOT MARK this column.
	Timeline	Three phases, final by fall 2025	
	Leader	Phase 1—Adam Administrator, Mrs. Leader, Mr. High Sr. Phase 2—Mr. High Sr. Phase 3—Teaching Staff	
	Assessment Criteria	Installation of smart boards in most if not all classrooms, laptops for all full-time teachers; teacher implementation of advanced use of educational technology as defined by school-offered professional development and current best practice	
	Needed Resources/ Projected Investment	Phase 1—\$20,000 per year for equipment (smart boards, teacher laptops); begin training of teachers, \$5,000 for three staff development days Phase 2—\$20,000 equipment Phase 3—\$20,000 equipment; \$10,000 bonus pay?	



Recommendations Report Matrix *SAMPLE

School Name: Sample Christian School

City: Anytown

State: ST

Administrator: Sam Principal

Report Date: September 6, 2022

Instructions:

1. In the first column insert recommendations from most recent accreditation report. Type the recommendation exactly as it appears in the accreditation report; include the recommendation number. If the school has more recommendations than will fit in the supplied chart, the school must add additional boxes and include one recommendation per row.
2. In the second column, each year, in the correct row, list actions taken in the previous 12 months. Each year add the new actions taken. Do not remove previous comments/actions. The matrix provides a history of actions.
3. The third column is for AACCS office use only. Once a recommendation is marked complete, no further reporting on that recommendation is required. The matrix will be returned to you after staff review.

Team Recommendation	School Response	For AACCS Staff Review ONLY. DO NOT MARK this column.
1.10 The team recommends that as part of the school improvement process, SCS develop additional measures of effectiveness to measure mission success, particularly addressing the spiritual dimensions of student development	Year 1—Formation of School Improvement Committee to develop plan of action.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 2—SIC is developing plan of action, which includes 2 focus groups (parents, alumni) and 2 surveys (graduating seniors, parents) to be conducted on a 4-year rotation. The parent focus group met twice this year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 3—Data collection in this area included the alumni focus group, which met once. We have decided to conduct the graduating senior survey annually. The two focus groups and parent survey will be conducted on a 3-year rotation. Survey Monkey is used for surveys to allow anonymity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 4—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 5—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
2.9 It is recommended that the school administrator complete the work necessary to acquire and maintain AACCS professional certification with an endorsement in school administration.	Year 1—A program has been chosen and application is being made to fulfill this recommendation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 2—Sam Principal will begin taking classes this winter through XYZ University to pursue a Master's in Educational Leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 3—First class completed; enrolled in 2 classes this year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 4—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 5—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
6.21 It is recommended that a schedule of classroom observations be established so that teachers are observed at least once annually and that a record of observations be maintained.	Year 1—Schedule for classroom observations has been established.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 2—School administrator is observing teachers (once each semester). Additionally, Elementary & Secondary Lead Teachers observe new teachers once per semester. Post-observation meetings are held the following day. Signed observation reports are filed in personnel files.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress AACCS response—Continue with current plan/activities.
	Year 3—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 4—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress
	Year 5—	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress