



NATIONAL
CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION

**Accreditation Manual
of the
National Christian
School Association**

Revised June 2020

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Dr. Brandon Tatum, Executive Director, National Christian School Association, Edmond, OK

Dedication

This manual is dedicated to Dr. Dwain Hart and the other long serving commissioners who have given selflessly of their time and wisdom to the accreditation process for National Christian School Association. The title goes to commissioners who retired from the National Christian School Association Board of Commissioners after serving more than ten years. It recognizes the life and efforts of Dr. Dwain Hart (1931-2012) who served two decades on the Board of Commissioners while holding such posts as Chairman of the Physical Education Department, Vice-President and Provost of Abilene Christian University.

At his retirement in 2011, Dr. Hart had served as a commissioner, accreditation team member, or consultant with virtually every NCSA accredited school. He was generous with his time not only as a commissioner but also as a highly-sought after board consultant, teaching countless board members the Biblical principles of board stewardship. In his consultancy, which was always done *pro bono*, Dr. Hart was a champion for school heads, urging boards to give them the autonomy they needed to make a school the best it could possibly be. His influence, like those who have earned the title of Dwain Hart Lifetime Commissioner, will influence NCSA schools for decades to come.

Board of Commissioners
National Christian School Association
June 2020

The Dr. Dwain Hart Lifetime Commissioners

Dr. Vaughn Luster
Mobile Christian School, Mobile AL
Ouachita Christian School, Monroe, LA
Dallas Christian School, Dallas, TX

Dr. Ed Higginbotham
Harding Academy, Searcy AR
Harding University, Searcy, AR

Dr. Rickey Harman
Lubbock Christian School, Lubbock, TX
Abilene Christian School, Abilene, TX
Weatherford Christian School, Weatherford, TX

Dr. Eddie Lee
Midland Christian School, Midland, TX

Dr. Gary Estep
Lubbock Christian University, Lubbock, TX

Marquita Moss
Brentwood Christian School, Austin, TX

**“... it is my prayer . . . that you may approve what is excellent ...”
Philippians 1:9-10**

The National Christian School Association

This Corporation is organized pursuant to the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act and does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof and is organized for non-profit purposes.

Throughout this manual 'NCSA' may appear for the National Christian School Association and SACS may appear for Cognia/Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Chapter 1 Approving All Things Excellent

HISTORY

Accreditation by the National Christian School Association grew out of the confluence of three separate organizations established by and for Christian schools operated by members of the churches of Christ: the Texas Christian Teachers Association (TCTA), later known as the Texas Christian Schools Association (TCSA); the National Christian School Association (NCSA) and an informal association of Christian school leaders, primarily in the southeastern states.

TCTA was established in the 1970's "to promote and encourage the highest standards of the education profession and the Christian religion among its member schools."

The National Christian School Association traces its roots to the annual National Conference of Christian School Leaders that grew out of a 1975 conversation between Dr. Jesse Long of Atlanta, Georgia, and Orvel Boyd of Mount Dora, Florida. This meeting of administrators of church of Christ elementary and secondary schools, now under NCSA auspices, has become an annual event that has been conducted every year since its 1975 inception in Atlanta.

Partners for Christian Education (Partners) was established in 1980 by Dr. Don Gardner to serve members of churches of Christ who were operating Christian elementary and secondary schools or desired to begin new schools. This organization soon took the leadership in planning and conducting the annual meetings of Christian school administrators from across the nation.

Indirectly, a 1984 decision by the Texas Education Agency to discontinue accreditation of Texas private schools led to the establishment of the National Christian Schools Association for the purpose of accrediting schools operated by churches of Christ. A consortium of private school associations, including Partners, negotiated with the Texas Education Agency to establish the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) with the goal of state recognition of private school accreditation.

In August of 1985, the Texas Christian Teachers Association voted to work with Partners to develop an accrediting body for schools operated by churches of Christ. In November, TCTA voted to become the Texas Christian Schools Association and to establish the Christian School Association of America as an accreditation body, with the help of Partners. Schools that had

been accredited by TEA at the time of the change were the charter members of CSAA and administrators from those schools became the first CSAA Accreditation Commission.

A drafting committee was appointed to draw up accreditation standards and seek the approval of the new TEPSAC commission. The Manual of Accreditation was adopted by CSAA in 1986 and approved by TEPSAC in 1987. Schools previously accredited by the Texas Education Agency were recognized as accredited but were required to complete a new accreditation process under the new standards by 1989. Lubbock Christian School, in 1988, was the first school to be accredited under this new process. Texas schools accredited through NCSA have been recognized as accredited by the Texas Education Agency since 1986.

Under Dr. Gardner's leadership, in 1988 CSAA expanded to a truly national organization under a governing board recruited from heads of schools from across the continent. On December 21 of that year, CSAA was re-chartered as the National Christian School Association.

The original NCSA Manual of Accreditation was drafted to not only meet the needs of Christian schools inside Texas but also in other states as well. The drafting committee felt that the time would come when Christian schools in other states would find it advantageous to receive NCSA accreditation. In 1994, Pike's Peak Christian School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, became the first school outside of Texas to earn NCSA accreditation.

PURPOSES

The National Christian School Association was originally chartered to provide accreditation to Christian schools affiliated with churches of Christ. The Board of Trustees of NCSA, restated this commitment to include Christian schools committed to the spiritual principles as defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith adopted in 2017. However, this is not its only mission. It provides numerous other services to these schools such as:

- Annual conference
- Annual directory
- Consultancy
- National Testing Program with NCSA norms
- Discounts with various vendors
- Web-based Placement Service—posting existing jobs and finding potential employees •
Web-based sharing of policy and procedure documents
- Assistance in beginning new schools.

The Articles of Incorporation in Article Four state the purposes of the National Christian School Association. The purposes for which this Corporation is formed are:

- **SECTION ONE**

The Corporation is created and shall be operated exclusively for the benefit of members schools of the NCSA. The schools served may enroll students in day care, pre-school, kindergarten through grade twelve, and at the college and university level. Member Schools will be committed to the spiritual principles defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith adopted in July 2017.

- SECTION TWO
The Corporation shall never be operated other than exclusively for religious, charitable, literary, and educational purposes.

- SECTION THREE
The Corporation shall encourage and assist individual or groups of Christians to start other Christian schools who are in alignment with the spiritual principles as defined in the NCSA Statement of Faith adopted in July 2017.

- SECTION FOUR
The Corporation shall accredit schools which meet the Standards of Accreditation established by the Corporation.

- SECTION FIVE
The Corporation shall grant membership to Christian school associations or to Christian schools who meet the requirements of membership established by the Corporation. Individuals may be granted membership.

- SECTION SIX
The Corporation shall have the general purpose of establishing, developing, and promoting Christian education through Christian schools.

- SECTION SEVEN
The Corporation shall receive and manage gifts of personal and real property necessary to the accomplishing of these purposes.

Chapter 2 Governance

The National Christian School Association Accreditation Commission is a self-perpetuating governing body operating under the authority of the NCSA Board of Trustees. The mission of the Commission is to establish and maintain standards that are designed to produce quality, Christ-centered education on the pre-college level. Accreditation by the National Christian School Association is a voluntary choice available to schools that are members of the association.

ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

- To establish eligibility and standards for NCSA accreditation.
- To determine the types of accreditation to be offered.
- To serve as the final authority on all accreditation decisions.
- To establish requirements to receive and maintain accreditation.
- To determine the number of years to grant accreditation.
- To recruit and train administrators and teachers to serve on visiting teams.
- To appoint a Director of Accreditation.
- To establish timely, fair, and appropriate procedures for the review of allegations that an accredited school is violating accreditation standards.
- To validate the reliability of its policies, procedures, and standards for accreditation on a continuing basis.
- To set all fees which a school must pay to receive and maintain NCSA accreditation.

NUMBER AND QUALIFICATIONS OF COMMISSIONERS

The Accreditation Commission will consist of not less than seven members. Qualifications for service on the Commission include:

- a demonstrated, deep, and abiding desire to help advance the purposes of Christian education;
- faithful member who is in good standing with a local congregation and committed to the spiritual principles as defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith
- at least one earned graduate degree;
- a solid knowledge and interest in K-12 accreditation and
- a willingness and ability to commit the time required.

The composition of the Commission will consist of:

- at least four chief administrators of NCSA accredited schools of varying size in enrollment; and
- at least three members drawn from the following categories:
 - A classroom teacher or administrator of an NCSA accredited school.
 - A member of the Board of an NCSA accredited school.
 - A member of the faculty from a Christian college/university with a teacher education program preparing certified teachers.
 - An at-large member drawn from a local congregation that is committed to the spiritual principles as defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith

TERMS OF SERVICE

Each Commissioner will be elected for a three-year term and may be re-elected. Commissioners' terms will be staggered so that no more than one-third of the Commissioners are elected in any given year. A Commissioner whose vocation changes during his/her term in office automatically loses membership on the Commission for that vocational position, effective at the next Commission meeting. No more than one Commissioner can be elected from an individual NCSA school.

Exceptions to these membership policies may be voted by a three-fourths majority of all Commissioners.

VACANCIES ON THE COMMISSION

If a Commissioner is unable to serve a full term, the Commission will elect a qualified person to fill the unexpired portion.

OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION

The officers of the Accreditation Commission shall be elected by the Commissioners for three year terms and shall consist of the chair, vice-chair, and the secretary. The chair shall preside at all meetings of the Commission and have the right to vote. The vice-chair shall serve as chair in the absence or incapacity of the chair. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of Commission proceedings. Each officer may be re-elected.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission shall meet at least annually at such times and places as determined by the Commissioners. The Commission may meet via telephone conference calls or other electronic methods. Two-thirds of the Commissioners shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. At any meeting at which a quorum is present, a vote of the majority of those present shall be necessary to approve any action.

DIRECTOR OF ACCREDITATION

I. QUALIFICATIONS

- The Director of Accreditation must be a faithful member of a local congregation that is committed to the spiritual principles as defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith
- The director must hold a graduate degree.
- The director must be a proven educational leader with a broad range of experience.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES (Divided between Director of Accreditation and President of the NCSA, Dec. 2014)

- The President serves as executive officer of the accreditation program and has the overall responsibility for its management.
- The Director of Accreditation and/or the President will be intimately knowledgeable about NCSA accreditation standards and policies and will advise schools that are considering accreditation.
- The Director of Accreditation will recruit and arrange training for a pool of qualified persons to serve on visiting teams. Recommendations for visiting team members will

be sought from NCSA-accredited schools. Training for potential visiting team members and new Commissioners who will serve as team leaders will be offered at least once a year.

- The Director of Accreditation will notify all accredited schools of their responsibility to submit an Annual Report at least two months before the deadline for submission of the report. Notification will include information about the approved format for the Annual Report.
- The Director of Accreditation will advise schools to submit their Annual Report to the school's Commissioners and the Director of Accreditation by a specified date set by the Commission.
- The President will advise schools in writing regarding any accreditation actions taken by the Commission that may affect them.
- The Director of Accreditation and/or the President will advise the Commission of any proposed policy changes by accreditation or government education entities affecting NCSA accreditation.
- The Director of Accreditation and/or the President will make available to those desiring to know:
 - The Standards and Principles by which schools are evaluated.
 - The procedures used in reaching the accreditation decision.
 - The roster of NCSA-accredited schools.
 - A roster of NCSA Commissioners.
 - The Director of Accreditation and the President will maintain accreditation files, including at least the following files:
 - Individual files for correspondence and actions regarding each school accredited or formerly accredited or seeking accreditation by NCSA.
 - A complete file of past and current standards with their dates.
 - A complete file of Commission minutes.
 - Files of correspondence with accreditation related organizations and activities.

Chapter 3 Accreditation Policies

WHAT IS NCSA ACCREDITATION?

- NCSA accreditation is a voluntary process designed to assure that a school is providing a quality Christian education.
- NCSA accreditation assists member schools in pursuing excellence and aids them in a continuous process of assessment, planning for improvement, and progress.
- NCSA accreditation is a process that involves the entire school community in conducting and documenting an intensive self-appraisal of each component of its ministry.
- NCSA accreditation requires a school to evaluate how well it is carrying out its mission, to assess its strengths and weaknesses, to document its compliance with accreditation standards, and to develop plans for improvement over a period of one or more years. Schools are expected to probe the Christian character of each component of its organization and to document the educational quality and integrity of the school.

- NCSA accreditation then involves a peer review by a team of colleagues from other Christian schools and may also include Christians in public education.

WHY SEEK NCSA ACCREDITATION?

- NCSA accreditation helps a Christian school maintain and improve the educational quality and Christian character of its educational programs.
- NCSA accreditation helps to assure the school’s constituency, the educational community on both the pre-college and college level, and the general public of the quality and Christian integrity of its educational program.
- NCSA accreditation helps a school to demonstrate that it is faithful to its own philosophy, mission, and goals.
- NCSA accreditation aids a school in identifying its strengths and weaknesses and creating a process for self-improvement.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Avoiding conflicts of interest is critical to the integrity of the accreditation process. The NCSA Accreditation Commission guards against conflicting loyalties to insure impartiality in reviews, recommendations, and rulings regarding accreditation of any nature and with respect to appeals.

In addition to the specific prohibitions found in the Code of Ethics in the Appendix of this Manual, the specific items below are banned:

- Commissioners may not serve on a visiting team for their own schools.
- Commissioners do not serve as Commissioner-Advisers to their own schools.
- Commissioners excuse themselves from any decision regarding the accreditation of their own schools.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Each accredited school is required to prepare an Annual Report that reflects its status and progress and submit that report to their Commissioner, the NCSA Director of Accreditation and the NCSA office by April 1 of each school year. The nature of this report and the procedure related to its filing is explained in Appendix B.

Most of the section below is new, revised or moved from another area of the manual or from minutes of our previous meetings.

NCSA ACCREDITATION POLICIES

The following are policies voted on by the NCSA Board of Commissioners and are a binding part of this Manual of Accreditation.

Notification of change of head

Accredited schools must notify NCSA in a timely manner of a change of Head of School, which may have an impact on the school’s ability to meet accreditation standards/indicators. This should be sent to NCSA under the signature of the interim Head of School or the Board of Trustees Chair. Upon a change in Head of School, NCSA may conduct a visit to the school for the purpose of a new Head of School interview.

Notification of crisis

Accredited schools must notify NCSA in a timely manner of any school related crisis, which may affect the school's ability to meet the accreditation standards/indicators. This information should be sent under the signature of the Head of School or Board of Trustees Chair. In the event a crisis occurs which may substantially impact the school's ability to carry out its mission and to meet standards, NCSA will initiate a discussion with the school's leadership concerning the details of the crisis.

Statement on retention of student records if a school closes

NCSA schools are required to implement and maintain records retention system that meets applicable governmental requirements for all operating, financial, personnel, and student records. The records retention system applies to paper and electronic records, include appropriate backup systems, and details consistent processes for records destruction. In states where no guidance is provided by governmental agencies, NCSA schools should consult with the NCSA office to ensure appropriate access and maintenance of all relevant records if there is school closure.

Reaccreditation

All accredited schools must host a visiting team within one semester before or after the semester of the five-year anniversary date of their previous visit. A variance to this timeline must be approved by NCSA. The visit will demonstrate the school's integrity and trustworthiness in complying with standards and responding to previous recommendations. A new self-study is required for each five-year period reflecting evidence of continuous improvement.

Non-degreed teacher policy

Schools will be required to report, using the NCSA form, any non-degreed full or part time K-12 professional staff member upon hiring or immediately if already employed. The non-degreed employee will have two years to complete the degree and will submit a report each semester to the Director of Accreditation.

School records retention policy including discontinuance policy

The school must have a records retention policy including a policy for the permanent storage of student transcripts and professional personnel employment records to be sent to NCSA headquarters in the event of a school closing.

NCSA records retention policy

The NCSA has adopted the TEPSAC records retention policy 11.5.0 (with the exception of correspondence), 11.6.0 and 11.7.0. A copy of this policy can be found at http://tepsac.org/resources/pdf/tepsac_policy_book.pdf

Pre-school teacher qualification policy

Extended day and pre-school teachers must be appropriately qualified and regularly trained for their responsibilities.

School complaint policy

Each school must have a published complaint policy and a published grievance policy.

NCSA complaint policy

Any complaint against a school must address a violation of an accreditation standard and contain full contact information for the complainant. If the complaint involves an accreditation standard, the school will be given thirty days to respond to the complaint. On receipt of the school's response, the commission will make an appropriate decision. Issues that do not involve a violation of standards will be referred back to the school. Decisions of the commission are final.

NCSA records retention policy

The NCSA has adopted the TEPSAC records retention policy 11.5.0 with the exception of correspondence, and 11.6.0 and 11.7.0.

UPDATES TO NCSA ACCREDITATION POLICIES

NCSA Assurance 40: Finances - It is strongly recommended by the Board of Commissioners that each accredited school undergo a financial review every year.

A financial review by a licensed CPA or accounting firm independent of the school is required once every five years (in the year prior to the external accreditation review). (Adopted June 2020 – see page 41)

Chapter 4 Types and Lengths of Accreditation

ELIGIBILITY FOR NCSA ACCREDITATION

A school must be a member of the National Christian School Association and must pay annual membership fees.

The school must not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin.

A school must offer four or more consecutive grades with at least four full-time equivalent faculty members which must include three full-time faculty members.

TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

Candidate. This refers to a school which has formally applied for accreditation but which has not completed its self-study. If a school does not complete its self-study and host a site visit within two years of its application date its candidate status will be automatically withdrawn.

Accredited. This refers to a school that demonstrates compliance with the NCSA standards for accreditation.

Accredited Sanctioned. This means an accredited school has been found to have deficiencies which must be corrected within a maximum of two years.

- a. The first year a school is placed on “advised” status.
- b. The second year a school is placed on “warned” status.
- c. The third year the school will be “unaccredited.”

These changes in status will also be reported to the appropriate regional accrediting body in the event the school is dually-accredited by an NCSA team.

Unaccredited. If a school fails to meet or maintain compliance with accreditation requirements, accreditation is either denied for new schools or revoked for previously accredited schools.

The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to place a school on warned status or revoke accreditation for a school that is in violation of any standard(s) to which, in the judgment of the board, is significant enough to warrant such action. Violations which could necessitate such action would include, but are not limited to, a school not filing an annual report, not paying required dues, not following correct procedures when implementing a substantive change, misrepresenting itself (including accreditation status), harboring any condition that may be detrimental to the clientele of the school, or falsely reporting its compliance with the policies and standards for accreditation.

If a school's accreditation is revoked, the school shall be given an opportunity to appeal. An appeal can be made in compliance with the procedures outlined in Appendix C of the Accreditation Manual.

LENGTH OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is granted for five years.

JOINT ACCREDITATION with Cognia (SACS/CASI and North Central regional accrediting bodies)

NCSA enjoys a full partnership with Cognia (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the North Central and Northwest regional accrediting bodies). This partnership allows the NCSA Board of Commissions to extend joint NCSA/Cognia accreditation to qualifying schools across the United States.

JOINT ACCREDITATION with Other Accrediting Bodies

A school which is being accredited by a different regional accrediting association or an association, may also desire to have NCSA accreditation. The Commissioners will accept the accreditation of another association if it approves the association. However, to grant joint accreditation the school must satisfy NCSA respecting its status as a "Christian school."

When a Christian school chooses to conduct its self-study with another association, but would like to receive NCSA accreditation, THE FOLLOWING STEPS MUST BE TAKEN:

1. The school must request "joint accreditation" in writing to the Director of Accreditation.
2. When the school's Visiting Team is constituted, at least one member should be NCSA representatives or observers if the other accrediting association will agree to it. The school's Commissioner Advisor and one other NCSA representative will serve on the visiting team. It is the responsibility of the school to arrange for NCSA representatives to be a part of the site visit. If an NCSA member is not allowed to be either a member or an observer in the original visit, a one day visit by the NCSA Commissioner must be made to the school. This independent site visit, if required, must be made after the original site visit has been made by the other accrediting association and after it has reached a positive accreditation decision.
3. The school must send copies of the self-study PRIOR to the site visit to the NCSA (a) Director of Accreditation, (b) to the school's NCSA Commissioner Advisor, and (c) to the professional accompanying the Commissioner on the site visit.
4. An addendum to the school improvement plan and sent to NCSA review team must be prepared by the school which (a) states and (b) demonstrates its distinctive Christian character. The NCSA Commission is interested in evidence that the school is more than just a good private school. The addendum will include NCSA Standards, Open Ended Questions, and NCSA Assurances. (See Appendix A for these items.)
 - a. The addendum should contain objective data supporting the contention that the school has unique qualities which make it a Christian school. This addendum to the self-study (a) should note perceived weaknesses in being a "Christian school" and (b) should provide a list of specific steps that will be taken for improvement.
 - b. Copies of this addendum must be sent to the (a) Director of Accreditation (b) to the school's NCSA Commissioner and (c) to the professional accompanying the Commissioner. It must be submitted at least six weeks prior to the site visit. A check list of all NCSA standards, open-ended questions, and assurances will be completed and provided to the NCSA representatives when the addendum is submitted.

When the site visit is completed by the NCSA Commissioner and the professional who assisted with the visit, the Commissioner will make a written report and send a copy to each member of the Board of Commissioners. The report will address the acceptability of:

- The school's addendum to the self-study addressing NCSA Organizational Content and assurances.
- The site visit.
- The School Improvement Plan.
- Adherence to NCSA Standards.

The NCSA Commissioner Advisor will make a recommendation either for NCSA accreditation or the denial of NCSA accreditation. Once the decision is reached by the Board of Commissioners, the President of NCSA will advise the school in writing of that decision.

If accreditation is granted, it will be specifically tied to the same calendar which the primary accreditation association follows.

Chapter 5 Steps to Initial and Ongoing Accreditation

ELEMENTS OF ACCREDITATION

The following items are all required for a successful NCSA Accreditation visit. Many of them can be found in Appendix A at the back of the manual. Others are available online by following the links in Chapter 6.

Appendix A

- NCSA Organizational Content (See Appendix A)
- NCSA Open Ended Questions (See Appendix A)
- NCSA Assurances
- Stakeholder Surveys
- Student Performance Analysis
- School Quality Factors (for those with dual accreditation with Cognia)
- School Improvement Plan
- Executive Summary

Preliminary Steps

A school seeking initial accreditation from NCSA alone or NCSA/Cognia is considered a candidate school. A candidate school should contact the NCSA President by regular mail on the letterhead of the school, indicating that the school is interested in either dual NCSA/Cognia accreditation or NCSA only. A check in the amount of \$100 should accompany the letter. This makes a school a candidate school.

It is also the responsibility of the school to do the following:

- Request a Manual of Accreditation.
- Carefully review the entire manual, paying particular attention to chapter V, Steps to Accreditation, and chapter VI, Principles and Standards for Accreditation.
- If it is apparent that the school does not meet these standards the school should not seek accreditation at this time but should use the accreditation standards as benchmarks in moving toward accreditation in the future.
- If the school does meet most of the standards and can reasonably expect to meet all standards within one to two years, the accreditation process should continue.
- Consult with the school board, administration, faculty, and staff concerning the accreditation process.
- In order for the accreditation process to be most effective, every member of the school team must adhere to the following:

- Understand the purposes of seeking accreditation.
- Learn the conditions of accreditation.
- Desire to be accredited.
- Know the costs of becoming accredited.
- Be willing to participate fully in the accreditation process.

The Board of Directors must formally approve the seeking of accreditation and budget the necessary funds.

- Funds necessary to make improvements required to meet standards.
- Accreditation fee (currently \$1/student in Pre3-highest grade offered)
- Funds required for travel, lodging, and meals for the Commissioner-Advisor and for the Visiting Committee.

No honorarium for the Commissioner-Advisor or members of the Visiting Committee is encouraged or expected.

Secondary Steps

After a school has completed the steps above, they are now ready to move forward on the steps below:

- Inform the Director of Accreditation of plans to continue to pursue accreditation and request a visit from a Commissioner.
- The Director of Accreditation will appoint a Commissioner for the school and will notify both the Commissioner and the school.
- The Commissioner will contact the school, and a date will be chosen for a visit.
- The Commissioner will visit the school and assist in determining readiness for the accreditation process.
- If it is jointly determined by the school administration and the Commissioner that the school is not ready to formally seek accreditation, the school should use the standards to move toward accreditation in the future.
- If it is jointly determined that the school is ready to formally seek accreditation, the process should continue.

THE NCSA ACCREDITATION PROCESS

This NCSA handbook outlines the accreditation/reaccreditation process for the candidate and reaccrediting school. The School appointed Accreditation Coordinator (AC) serves as the liaison between NCSA and the school throughout the accreditation process. This person is responsible for submitting all necessary accreditation materials per the stated guidelines. The AC may or may not be the Head of School. The school determines additional tasks of the AC. The AC also serves as the primary contact for the school's Visiting Chair and Visiting Team, and manages the visit logistics. The majority of communication from NCSA regarding the school's accreditation process will be directed to the AC via email.

Fall team visits should be scheduled between September 15 and November 15. Spring visits should be scheduled between January 15 and April 15. This is essential if Cognia is a part of the accreditation, to meet their deadlines. Once the application is approved, the school seeking dual

accreditation will begin using the NCSA School Accreditation Self Study to conduct its self-study. Those schools seeking only NCSA accreditation will only complete the NCSA part of this Self Study. The NCSA Director of Accreditation will confirm the visit date with the school Accreditation Coordinator and the school's NCSA commissioner. Although the Commissioner will assist schools with logistical questions regarding accreditation, the school should not expect the Commissioner to function as a "facilitator" of the process.

Preliminary visit by the team chair: The school's assigned NCSA Commissioner will make a preliminary visit (real or virtual) to the school 6-12 months before the visiting team's visit. The school will provide the commissioner with a copy of the school's initial responses to the standards/indicators at least two weeks prior to the commissioner's preliminary visit. Note that providing evidence of compliance with the Cognia standards, the NCSA standards and the NCSA assurances is the foundation of the accreditation process. In most cases, compliance with the standards is completed before the self-study begins.

At the preliminary visit,

At the time of the preliminary visit to the candidate school, the chair typically will:

- Tour the school (more likely with new candidate schools or see remodeled or new facilities in re-accreditation schools)
- Review compliance with standards and indicators with Head of School and/or Accreditation Coordinator
- Meet with Business Officer
- Confirm focus areas the school is working on (note this is the basis for NCSA to assign team members who are a good fit for the school)
- Determine logistics of the visit: schedule, team room, technology needs, hotel/rooming accommodations, etc.
- Discuss expenses of visit

Once the Commissioner has reviewed the above listed materials, NCSA will begin to assign team members. Team members are assigned based on areas of interest according to the Pre-Visit survey, team member geographic location, and availability. The visiting team will consist of a chair and other peer educators. The size of the visiting team will be relative to the size of the school. If a school has a pre-school operation, at least one visiting team member must be experienced in pre-school operations.

Before the Team Visit

Six weeks before the visit, the Candidate or Reaccrediting School should submit its final report to the assigned Commissioner. Also, in the month leading up to the visit, the following duties need to be completed.

- Ask for any special needs/requests/dietary restrictions from the team members.
- Inform the Commissioner of directions and parking information for the school and hotel. Provide parking permits or notify security as necessary.
- Hang directional signs on campus if appropriate.

- Share emergency (home/cell) contact information for school coordinator/host. Perhaps gather emergency information for each team member as well.
- Prepare name badges for members.
- Provide needed office supplies.
- Provide computer access. Determine whether team members will bring their own laptops or if you will need to set up access to school laptops or the computer lab.
- Provide water, coffee, and snacks.
- Assemble items that might be useful to the team (Please provide in a digital format if possible using Dropbox or a similar tool):
- School yearbooks, magazines, newsletters
- Admissions materials – brochures, applications, guidelines, etc.
- Curriculum guides
- Strategic plan
- Student handbook
- Staff handbook
- Parent handbook
- Board policy manual
- Any other policies & documents
- Campus map
- Surveys conducted with complete demographic data
- Written response to indicators and any materials referenced therein
- School calendar
- Organizational chart
- Job descriptions
- College profile info
- Mission statement
- Marketing plan
- Crisis plan
- Professional development plan
- Faculty/staff directory
- Your school's expense reimbursement form (a copy for each person)

During the visit

During the team visit, the School should provide access to any and all supporting materials and documents related to compliance with the standards/indicators. The school should also provide appropriate access to staff, students, parents, and other constituents.

Visits must last a minimum of 2.5 days - sample schedules may be requested of the Commissioner. It may be longer if the Commissioner and Head of School feel more time is necessary. In consultation with the Head of School, the Commissioner will determine the most appropriate visitation schedule and format.

After the visit

The Head of School, in collaboration with the Commissioner will modify the School Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The plan will include a limited number of items the school agrees to work on in the next five years based on the findings of the visiting team and its recommendations. Part of the Annual Report each year will be an update on the progress the school has made on each item in the SIP.

Schools must report to NCSA on any required actions after the team visit. This report ensures continued compliance with standards and indicators and documents efforts made in addressing the visiting team's recommendations and the school's self-study goals.

Accredited schools must maintain membership in the National Christian School Association by paying their membership dues and accreditation fees by October 15 of each year. Dually accredited schools must directly remit their dues to the appropriate regional accrediting body each year.

Accredited schools will be strongly advised to use the Annual Conference of the National Christian School Association each March as a source of continuing education and to learn of any new information about NCSA accreditation. The March convention is also an excellent way for each school to fulfill the obligation for board training for its board members.

Accredited schools must file an Annual Report by April 1 each year.

Accredited schools must abide by all NCSA policies and procedures.

Chapter 6 Accreditation Resources

The following paper and virtual resources of the National Christian School Association are available to schools up for original accreditation or renewal of their accreditation.

DIRECTORY AND PUBLICATIONS

The National Christian School Association its annual Directory, which lists member schools and indicates which are NCSA-accredited schools, on its website, www.nationalchristian.org. Printed directories are provided as a service to member schools, and a limited number are available to others for a fee.

NCSA accredited schools in Texas also are listed on the websites of the Texas Education Agency, <http://askted.tea.state.tx.us/tsd2003/home.htm>, and the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission, www.tepsac.com.

NCSA accredited schools also receive the Accreditation Manual and updates upon request.

This section of the NCSA Manual of Accreditation contains three parts. They are:

- Part One:
NCSA Standards—school responses to 19 standards in eight categories that probe the Christian nature of the school with four possible levels of compliance in rubric form.
- Part Two:
NCSA Open-ended Questions—five questions that speak to the nature of the school, the soundness of the educational philosophy, stakeholder support and the role of the school in the spiritual formation of the student.
- Part Three:
NCSA Assurances—40 “yes/no” questions that speak to many aspects of the school’s operations including governance, personnel, student services and finances. These assurances are answered on an annual basis with the school’s annual report and all answers of “no” should be explained by the administrator. An answer of “no” does not automatically place a school on warned or advised status, but allows an administrator to work with the commission on the areas of the school that currently need addressing.

NCSA Standards

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Standard 1 - The school's distinctive Christian identity and culture is reflected in its belief and mission statements, written vision, Christian philosophy, and/or written purpose statements.

1.1 The school's foundational statements (vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith) are comprehensive and addresses such topics as: belief in God and His Son Jesus; the Bible as the Word of God; the nature of man; man's relationship to the world; how students learn; parental role in the education of their children; relation of the school and the church.

4 - The school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith clearly delineate the Christian identity of the school. The school statement of Christian philosophy is comprehensive and addresses such topics as: belief in God and His Son Jesus; the Bible as the Word of God; the nature of man; man's relationship to the world; how students learn; parental role in the education of their children; relation of the school and the church.

3 - The school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith provide a Christian foundation for the school and have informed its Christian identity. The school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith have informed the school's operations at a foundational level.

2 - The principles and values espoused in the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith delineate the school's identity but do not have a significant impact in the day-to-day operations of the school.

1 - The Christian school has a set of basic beliefs that determine the goals of the school.

1.2 The school has been purposeful in ensuring that its Christian principles and values are aligned and integrated throughout the school's operations.

4 - The school has been purposeful in ensuring that its culture is fully aligned with the Christian principles and values espoused in its vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith and the integration of those principles and values are evident throughout the school's operations.

3 - The school's culture reflects Christian principles and values consistent with its vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith.

2 - The school has begun the process of fully aligning its programs, services, and operations with the principles and values espoused in its vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith.

1 - The school demonstrates a very weak or non-existent unique Christian identity and/or Christian culture. The school's statement of vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith do not impact the school's operations.

1.3 The school, using its carefully crafted written statement of Christian philosophy, has developed a set of school goals or objectives.

4 - The school, using its carefully crafted written statement of Christian philosophy, has developed a set of school goals or objectives that are measurable, broad range, and regularly reviewed.

3 - The school, using its carefully crafted written statement of Christian philosophy, has developed a set of school goals or objectives.

2 - The school, using its carefully crafted written statement of Christian philosophy, has begun to develop a set of school goals or objectives.

1 - The school has not developed a set of school goals or objectives based on its vision, purpose, or Christian philosophy.

Suggested Evidence:

- Philosophy included in key foundational documents
- Handbooks, guides, membership/operational/employment policies incorporate elements of the foundational documents
- Bible/religious classes/programs demonstrate alignment with the foundational documents
- Curriculum and instruction reflect the school's Christian mission
- Business and other ancillary operations incorporate concepts delineated in the foundational documents
- Meetings incorporate elements of the foundational documents
- School personnel articulate the concepts delineated in the foundational documents
- School personnel model Christian character and other vital aspects of the Christian faith
- Goals, short, and long range planning documents
- Goal results
- Processes in place to ensure the school's culture reflects Christian principles and values consistent with its vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- School's goals or objectives have been evaluated with regard to alignment to the school's vision, et al.
- Practices in place for monitoring school goals or objectives

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Standard 2 - The school actively encourages community involvement to support the Christian school efforts to operate a high quality educational program. Effective partnerships are vital part of quality education.

2.1 The school's Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith are communicated to stakeholders and understood by them.

4 - The school's Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith are clearly communicated to all stakeholders and fully understood by them.

3 - The school's Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith have been communicated to all stakeholders. Stakeholders can articulate a general understanding of the school's Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith.

2 - The school's Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith have been communicated to some stakeholders. Most stakeholders demonstrate limited knowledge and/or understanding of the Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith.

1 - The school has made little or no attempts to communicate its Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith to its stakeholders. Stakeholders have little or no knowledge and/or understanding of the Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith.

2.2 Stakeholders are given opportunities to evaluate and give feedback.

4 - Stakeholders are given multiple and regular opportunities to evaluate and give feedback.

3 - Stakeholders are given regular opportunities to evaluate and give feedback.

2 - Stakeholders are given limited opportunities to evaluate and give feedback.

1 - Stakeholders are given no opportunities to evaluate and give feedback.

Suggested Evidence:

- Examples demonstrating that the Christian school board and the school constituency work together to produce positive student learning outcomes.
- Examples of how the Christian school board and the administration communicate effectively with parents, patrons, and friends concerning school operations and student achievement.
- Use of a systematic program to inform the school family about events and issues regarding the school.

- Examples showing that all members of the school family are permitted and encouraged to express their views about the school. Documentation showing that an official channel for this purpose exists.
- Documentation showing how a well-established method of school parent communication is utilized.
- Documentation of financial support from the community.
- Handbooks that include Christian philosophy and/or statement of faith
- Website/page that includes Christian philosophy and/or statement of faith
- Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the philosophy and statement of faith Examples:
 - The means by which the school’s Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith been communicated to all stakeholders
 - Examples of how stakeholders articulate a general understanding of the school’s Christian philosophy of education and statement of faith
 - List of procedures in place for stakeholders to give feedback on a regular basis
 - List of procedures in place to evaluate this feedback
 - List of procedures in place to respond to this feedback
 - The means by which the results are communicated to the stakeholders

GOVERNANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Standard 3 - The governance of the school provides policies and procedures to provide for a quality Christian education.

3.1 The school ensures that the development, review, revision, and implementation of its policies and procedures are informed and consistent with biblical principles and supportive of the school’s Christian philosophy.

4 - The school has a formalized process in place that ensures that the development, review, revision, and implementation of its policies and procedures are always fully consistent with biblical principles and supportive of the school’s Christian philosophy.

3 - The school demonstrates that the development, review, revision, and implementation of its policies and procedures are consistent with biblical principles and supportive of the school’s Christian philosophy.

2 - The school demonstrates that its policies and procedures are consistent with biblical principles and supportive of the school’s Christian philosophy.

1 - The school has developed policies and procedures that are not fully consistent with biblical principles and/or the school’s Christian philosophy.

3.2 The school demonstrates that biblical principles and its Christian philosophy are embedded in its policies and procedures and the way the school functions.

4 - The school demonstrates that biblical principles and its Christian philosophy are deeply embedded in its policies and procedures and the way the school functions.

3 - Biblical principles and the school's Christian philosophy are embedded in its policies and procedures and are foundational to the school's culture

2 - Biblical principles and the school's Christian philosophy inform the school's culture.

1 - The school's policies and procedures have little influence and impact on ensuring the school functions consistent with biblical principles and its Christian philosophy.

Suggested Evidence:

- School Board policies and procedures concerning its own operations •
Personnel job qualifications/descriptions/roles/evaluation
- Comprehensive policies concerning:
 - Students: admission, attendance, transfers, course offerings, graduation requirements, promotion and retention, remediation and placement, participation in extracurricular activities, conditions leading to suspension or dismissal or other disciplinary sanctions
 - Employees: responsibilities, job descriptions, rights under employment status, appraisal and evaluation, retention and dismissal, contracts and assignments, and grievance and appeal procedures
 - Health and safety: policies dealing with student health, accident and fire prevention, procedures in case of accidents and disasters, and safety precautions
 - Discrimination: the board has a published policy against discrimination on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin
 - Fiscal operations
- Policies support the Christian purpose of the school
- Policies and procedures in place for monitoring and assessing the development, review, revision, and implementation of the school's policies and procedures with regard to the school's Christian philosophy
- Documentation of the development, review, revision, and implementation of policies
- Policies in place that provide for and assess a distinctly Christian education for students
- Policies in place that support staff/faculty in providing this distinctly Christian education
- Policies in place that provide and assess Christian direction and oversight of fiscal management

EVALUATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Standard 4 - A dynamic Christian school/program is always committed to continuous improvement of programs and services and never satisfied with current or past achievements.

4.1 The school reviews current writings, research, and/or trend data to evaluate and improve programs and services consistent with its Christian philosophy.

4 -The school has established a fully functional, documented, and comprehensive process to systematically evaluate and improve programs and services, incorporating the use of current writings, research, and/or trend data in areas consistent with its Christian philosophy as an integral part of the review.

3 - The school has established a process to systemically evaluate and improve the school's programs and services, encouraging the use of current writings, research, and/or trend data in areas consistent with its Christian philosophy to inform the review.

2 - The school is developing a process to evaluate and improve programs and services, incorporating the use of current writings, research, and/or trend data in areas consistent with its Christian philosophy.

1 - Limited to no attempts have been made by the school to utilize current writings, research, and/or trend data to evaluate and improve programs and services consistent with its Christian philosophy.

4.2 There is a process for establishing and reviewing measurable learning goals consistent with its Christian identity.

4 - The school has implemented a comprehensive process for establishing and reviewing measurable learning goals consistent with its Christian identity.

3 -There is a process for establishing and reviewing measurable learning goals consistent with its Christian identity.

2 -The school is developing a process for establishing and reviewing measurable learning goals consistent with its Christian identity.

1 - There is limited or no process for establishing and reviewing measurable learning goals consistent with its Christian identity.

Suggested Evidence:

- References/citations of research related to foundational documents
- Board and/or other meeting minutes
- School Achievement and standardized testing data

- School Self Study and Improvement Plan
- School Strategic Plan
- Stakeholder surveys
- Faculty/Staff Evaluations
- Members of school governance are knowledgeable of current trends, writings, and/or research in areas related to foundational documents
- School personnel are knowledgeable of current trends, writings, and/or research in areas related to foundational documents
- The school's definition of success with regard to its Christian identity
- The process for systemic review of the school's programs and services with regard to its Christian philosophy of education
- Documentation of stakeholder's involvement in the review process
- Data the school collects for review
- Process in place to ensure that the planning process identifies measurable objectives, strategies, activities, resources, and timelines for achieving all improvement goals

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Standard 5 - The school ensures biblical principles (biblical content, biblical worldview, spiritual formation, Christian character, and Christian service) are integrated and written in all curricula (including any taught through alternative delivery methods).

5.1 The school demonstrates biblical principles are embedded in curricula.

4 - The school has a formalized, systemic, and implemented process to ensure that biblical principles are embedded in all curricula and that instructional practices support effective biblical integration across the curriculum.

3 - The school demonstrates that biblical principles are embedded and implemented in most curricula and that instructional practices support biblical integration across the curriculum.

2 - The school has begun a process to ensure that biblical principles are embedded, implemented, and written in curricula and that instructional practices support biblical integration across the curriculum.

1 -The school has implemented a curriculum into which biblical principles have been embedded in limited to no content areas.

5.2 Teachers show evidence of using the Christ-centered curriculum in their teaching and provide opportunities for students to incorporate biblical principles in real world situations.

4 - All teachers show evidence of using the Christ-centered curriculum in their teaching and consistently provide multiple opportunities for students to incorporate biblical principles through the application of their knowledge and skills to real world situations.

3 - Teachers show evidence of using the Christ-centered curriculum in their teaching and provide opportunities for students to incorporate biblical principles through the application of their knowledge and skills to real world situations.

2 - Some teachers show evidence of using the Christ-centered curriculum in their teaching and some opportunities are provided for students to incorporate biblical principles through the application of their knowledge and skills to real world situations.

1 - Few teachers show evidence of using Christ-centered curriculum in their teaching and limited to no opportunities are provided for students to incorporate biblical principles through the application of their knowledge and skills to real world situations.

5.3 A system for evaluation of student development in the areas of biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, and Christian service has been developed that is aligned with the student spiritual formation goals.

4 - A system for comprehensive evaluation of student development in the areas of biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, and Christian service that is fully aligned with the student spiritual formation goals has been developed and implemented.

3 - A system for comprehensive evaluation of student development in the areas of biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, and Christian service has been developed is aligned with the student spiritual formation goals.

2 - There is little evidence that a system for comprehensive assessment of student development of spiritual formation goals has been developed or implemented.

1 - There is limited to no evidence that a system for comprehensive assessment of student development of spiritual formation goals has been developed.

Suggested Evidence:

- Policies related to biblical integration
- Curriculum guides and scope and sequence and/or curriculum mapping include biblical integration objectives (biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, Christian service)
- Lesson plans include biblical integration objectives

- Students taking a course without formal biblical integration objectives (e.g. online course, dual credit course, etc.) whether online or face-to-face, have opportunity to engage in activities that connect biblical principles to the subject matter.
- In-service training on biblical principles (biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, Christian service) and integration
- Staff are knowledgeable about the integration of biblical principles (biblical content, biblical worldview, Christian character, and Christian service) in the content area(s) in which they teach
- Integration of biblical principles is demonstrated in classroom instruction
- Professional Development and staff meetings highlight discussions of biblical integration
- Process in place to ensure the curriculum is aligned with the school's purpose and direction
- The curriculum and learning opportunities in each course/class provide for all students to develop spiritually
- Evidence exists to demonstrate like courses/classes have equivalent spiritual/Biblical learning experiences
- Data indicates student spiritual growth
- Vertical and horizontal alignment of the Christian curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Examples of how teachers plan and incorporate Christian principles into their classroom instruction

STUDENT SERVICES

Standard 6 - The school provides services to ensure the spiritual health of the students.

6.1 The school develops and implements co- and extra-curricular programs aligned with the school's foundational statements.

4 - The school has a formalized, systemic and implemented process to align student services, co- and extra-curricular programs with the school's foundational statements. Students are consistently provided multiple opportunities for spiritual growth through their participation in co- and extra-curricular programs.

3 - The school demonstrates that co- and extra-curricular programs are aligned with the school's foundational statements. Students are frequently provided opportunities for spiritual growth through their participation in co- and extra-curricular programs.

2 - The school develops and implements co- and extra-curricular programs that indicate some alignment with the school's foundational statements. Students have few opportunities for spiritual growth through their participation in co- and extra-curricular programs.

1 - The school has no process to ensure co- and extra-curricular programs are aligned with the school's foundational statements. Students have limited to no opportunities for spiritual growth through their participation in co- and extra-curricular programs.

6.2 The school develops and implements guidance programs aligned with the school's foundational statements.

4 - The school demonstrates a formalized, systemic, and implemented process to align the guidance program with the school's foundational statements.

3 - The school demonstrates that guidance programs are aligned with the school's foundational statements.

2 - The school develops and implements guidance programs that indicate some alignment with the school's foundational statements.

1 - The school has no process to ensure guidance programs are aligned with the school's foundational statements.

Suggested Evidence:

- Policies related to alignment of student services and co- and extra-curricular programs with the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- Co- and extra-curricular opportunities for students
- Policies related to spiritual/religious requirements for coaches/sponsors/directors of co- and extra-curricular programs
- Training of coaches/sponsors/directors of co- and extra-curricular programs with regard to the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- Assessments showing that co- and extra-curricular programs demonstrate alignment with the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- Co- and extra-curricular programs staff are knowledgeable about the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith and how those programs support the goals
- Student services and co- and extra-curricular program staff meetings include discussions of the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- Stakeholders indicate support of student services and co- and extra-curricular programs with regard to attainment of the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and goals.
- Elements such as dependence on God to work in every aspect, use of scripture, love and concern for students, and understanding of basic principles of biblical guidance and counseling are obvious in student services and co- and extra-curricular programs.
- Program design elements are in place within a formal structure to allow school personnel to develop and implement co- and extracurricular programs that are aligned with the school's vision, purpose/mission, Christian philosophy, and statement of faith
- Process for school personnel to determine the spiritual needs of students
- Process for school personnel to provide or coordinate programs to meet the spiritual needs of students
- Program evaluations

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Standard 7 - The school ensures that the acquisition and use of all instructional resources (technology, print, and other media resources) are aligned with the school's purpose/mission and Christian philosophy of education.

7.1 The school has developed policies and procedures regarding the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other media resources that are aligned with the school's foundational documents.

4 - The school has developed and implemented policies and procedures regarding the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other media resources that are fully aligned with the school's foundational documents.

3 - The school has developed policies and procedures regarding the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other media resources that are aligned with the school's foundational documents.

2 - The school has developed some policies and procedures regarding the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other media resources that demonstrate some alignment with the school's foundational documents.

1 - The school has not aligned its policies and procedures regarding the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other resources with its purpose/mission and Christian philosophy of education.

7.2 The school has implemented an Internet usage policy consistent with biblical principles that has been communicated to all school personnel, students, and parents.

4 - The school has fully implemented an Internet usage policy consistent with biblical principles that is well articulated and clearly understood by all school personnel, students, and parents.

3 - The school has established an Internet usage policy consistent with biblical principles that has been communicated to and understood by all school personnel, students, and parents.

2 - The school has established an Internet usage policy consistent with biblical principles.

1 - The school has not established an Internet usage policy consistent with biblical principles.

7.3 The school demonstrates that technology resources are used in an ethical manner and that school personnel and students follow guidelines to prevent plagiarism and/or copyright infringement.

4 - All school personnel and students use technology resources in an ethical manner and follow clearly established guidelines to prevent plagiarism and/or copyright infringement.

3 - School personnel and students use technology resources in an ethical manner and school personnel and students follow guidelines to prevent plagiarism and/or copyright infringement.

2 -The school has not fully established guidelines regarding the ethical use of technology resources and the prevention of plagiarism.

1 - The school has not established guidelines regarding the ethical use of technology resources and the prevention of plagiarism by school personnel and students.

Suggested Evidence:

- Review of media center resources
- Acceptable technology and/or Internet use policy
- Librarian/media center director articulates policies regarding technology, print, and other media resources related to alignment with school's purpose/mission and Christian philosophy of education
- IT personnel/webmaster articulate policies regarding technology resources and web content related to alignment with purpose/mission and Christian philosophy of education
- Students demonstrate an understanding of appropriate and responsible use of technology, print, and other resources consistent with biblical principles
- Policies and procedures that provide Christian direction to the acquisition and use of technology, print, and other media resources
- Policies and procedures communications to stakeholders
- Evaluations of policies and procedures

PERSONNEL

Standard 8 - The school ensures that personnel are Christians who are competent, dedicated, and well qualified for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to the school's foundational documents. The professional development program is aligned with the school's foundational documents.

8.1 The school ensures that personnel are Christians who are competent, dedicated, and well qualified for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to the school's foundational documents.

4 -All personnel are Christians who are competent, dedicated, and well qualified for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to and demonstrate a thorough and common understanding of the school's foundational documents. All teachers are degreed and have certification in the majority assignment or at least 18 semester hours of elementary education courses for all kindergarten and elementary teachers and at least 18 semester hours in the subject matter being taught for secondary teachers. A degreed secondary teacher with 12 semester hours in a subject may teach that subject if the assignment is for less than one-half the teaching load.

3 -All personnel are Christians who are competent, dedicated, and qualified for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to and demonstrate an understanding of the school's foundational documents. All teachers are degreed and most have certification in the majority assignment or at least 18 semester hours of elementary education courses for all kindergarten and elementary teachers and at least 18 semester hours in the subject matter being taught for secondary teachers. A degreed secondary teacher with 12 semester hours in a subject may teach that subject if the assignment is for less than one-half the teaching load.

2 -All personnel are Christians who are competent and dedicated for their assigned responsibilities and are committed to the school's foundational documents. All teachers are degreed.

1 - All personnel are Christians who are competent and dedicated for their assigned responsibilities. All teachers are degreed. Little or no effort has been made to establish a common understanding of components of the foundational documents.

8.2 The professional development program is aligned with the school's foundational documents.

4 -The school leadership has developed a professional development and evaluation program that incorporates elements of the school's foundational documents into all professional development activities. All school personnel receive professional development related to components of the school's foundational documents.

3 -The school leadership has developed a professional development and evaluation program that incorporates some elements of the school's foundational documents into most professional development activities. Most school personnel receive professional development related to components of the school's foundational documents.

2 - School personnel receive little professional development that is related to components of the school's foundational documents.

1 -Components of the school's foundational documents are not incorporated into evaluation and professional development activities.

Suggested Evidence:

- Teacher professional development portfolios
- School evaluation program of faculty and staff
- Schedule of school professional development activities
- School personnel articulate the rationale for professional development goals/objectives
- School personnel relate professional development activities to concepts delineated in the foundational documents
- Personnel evaluations

Open Ended Questions

Focus Question: How does the school demonstrate a Christian philosophy of education that encourages the spiritual development of each student?

Focus Question: How does the school use its Christian philosophy of education to build stakeholder support?

Focus Question: How does the school ensure that all school improvement is based on recent school data and sound principles of change and not on the current “fad”?

Focus Question: What is the process by which the school develops and implements its Bible/religious instructional programs to include student spiritual formation goals?

Focus Question: How does the school determine, develop, and implement student and family services needed to support student spiritual formation?

Appendix A Assurances

1	Governance	The school is a member of the National Christian School Association in good standing.
2	School Improvement	A continuous improvement process for the school/program is implemented that prioritizes improving the attainment of expected student learning outcomes, the accountability to all stakeholders, and the strategic use of resources based on the Christian philosophy of education.
3	School Improvement	The school reports annually a 5-year updated school improvement plan. That plan includes improvement priorities from the school's last accreditation visit and the current status of those priorities.
4	Governance	The chief administrator is the educational and spiritual leader of the school and must be a deeply committed Christian who is an active member in good standing with a local congregation that is committed to New Testament Christianity, as defined by the NCSA Statement of Faith.
5	Governance	The chief administrator has an earned graduate degree and adequate experience and professional preparation as determined by the board. Administrators of accredited schools serving as of January 12, 1998, will be exempted.
6	Governance	The chief administrator participates in activities and training programs designed to increase his/her knowledge of administration and how to be a more effective administrator.
7	Governance	No full time employee serves on the board.

8	Governance	<p>Comprehensive policies are in place for:</p> <p>Students: admission, attendance, transfers, course offerings, graduation requirements, promotion and retention, remediation and placement, participation in extracurricular activities, conditions leading to suspension or dismissal or other disciplinary sanctions.</p> <p>Employees: responsibilities, job descriptions, rights under employment status, appraisal and evaluation, retention and dismissal, contracts and assignments, and grievance and appeal procedures.</p> <p>Discrimination: the board has a published policy against discrimination on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin.</p> <p>Safety: the school has appropriate policies to ensure the safety of students, employees, and visitors to the campus.</p> <p>Each board policy must be reviewed at least once within a five-year period. Each policy bears the date it was adopted, reviewed, or amended by the school board.</p>
9	Governance	All members of the school board receive training in Christian trusteeship.
10	Governance	The educational program complies with all applicable rules of the State Board of Education, which includes state requirements respecting the length of the school day and the school year and regulations concerning teacher planning and preparation time.
11	Personnel	All administrators, teachers, and staff personnel must be Christians, able to give a clear defense of the faith and to serve as Christian role models in every area of their lives.
12	Personnel	The school builds a stable faculty and staff.
13	Personnel	A well-planned teacher / staff recruitment program is followed.
14	Personnel	The board enables the school to pay fair salaries and supports professional growth opportunities.
15	Personnel	The school does not have a pattern of excessive administrator and teacher turnover.
16	Personnel	Use of part-time teachers is minimal and defensible.
17	Personnel	Sponsors, advisors, or coaches of extracurricular activities are selected on the basis of background and training and are appropriately compensated for their work.

18	Personnel	Orientation for new staff members is thorough and is conducted before new staff works with the students.
19	Personnel	All other administrators and all teachers, counselors, and librarians have at least a bachelor's degree.
20	Student Services	The school faculty and staff comply with all applicable federal, state, and/or county health and safety codes.
21	Student Services	The school has a written crisis management plan for emergency situations that may affect the students, faculty, and staff. The plan must address local weather conditions (i.e., tornado, flood), dangerous situations on campus (i.e., fire, intruder, weapons brought to campus), and health emergencies (i.e., contagious illness, dangerous spill in the chemistry laboratory). Students, faculty, and staff are drilled in procedures to follow in each kind of emergency. Policies promoting student safety are established and observed in appropriate curricular areas such as science and in traffic control, transportation of students, athletics, and other events.
22	Student Services	The guidance services are grounded in biblical principles and include the following minimum services: (1) for early education children and families—assessment, screenings, referrals to community services, resources, and referrals to support the success of the children and families; (2) for elementary and middle/junior-high school students—standardized and/or criterion-referenced testing, counseling, and referrals; (3) for high school students—assessment, counseling, referrals, and post-high school planning.
23	Student Services	The school fosters a spirit of Christian service by offering opportunities for service projects and other service activities.
24	Student Services	Cumulative records are current and accessible only to authorized personnel. Appropriate procedures are followed for accessing, transferring, archiving, and reference use. Cumulative records are kept in a fireproof location or, if allowed by state law, duplicate copies of all cumulative records are kept in another place. If a system of paper, electronic, or CD copies is selected, its content is kept current and its location ensures reasonable safety of the files. The school record-keeping system is accurate, complete, current, and properly managed. The school has a policy regarding access to school records by individuals who are not part of the school's professional staff (i.e., parents, social workers, attorneys, and others).

25	Student Services	The school provides and encourages participation in extracurricular activities that support its Christian philosophy, mission, and goals. Extracurricular activities include a balance of athletic, academic, and fine arts consistent with the school's mission and do not place an undue burden on class time.
26	Student Services	Sufficient facilities, appropriate personnel, and adequate financial support is available for each component of the extracurricular activities program.
27	Student Services	Where coed activities are not appropriate, activities for both genders are comparable in number and reflect the gender mix of the student population.
28	Student Services	The school does not operate as a home school umbrella. A student must be enrolled at the school, a majority of the instruction must occur on campus, and use school curriculum and assessments administered by school personnel.
29	Student Services	The school does not use distance or online learning as its primary method of education for any grade level.
30	Finances	Endowment – Plans are in place for building an endowment fund.
31	Finances	Earned Income/Gift Income - A combination of earned income (tuition) and gift income is adequate to finance the school's operations.
32	Finances	Annual Fund - An annual gift budget is developed which sets forth the goal of each fundraiser and who is responsible for it.
33	Finances	Budget - The school operates with adequate financial resources and demonstrates professional management of its resources. A budget for each fiscal year is developed using timely input from all appropriate departments and is approved by the school board.
34	Finances	Borrowing Money - The Board policy manual includes a fiscally responsible policy concerning the borrowing of money for both operations and capital expenditures.
35	Finances	Booster Club - The relationship of any booster group which raises money for the school is made clear by the board.
36	Finances	The public relations program of the school creates a climate of acceptance by the school constituency.

37	Finances	Development and Fundraising - The school has implemented a plan in support of the school's mission and goals.
38	Finances	Financial Records - Financial management uses timely and professional methods. All business records are maintained using a recognized system with established checks and balances to assure accuracy and security. Fiscal responsibilities are up-to-date.
39	Finances	Trustee Giving - In addition to overseeing the school's fund development program, each trustee actively participates in giving and raising funds.
40	Finances	<p>It is strongly recommended by the Board of Commissioners that each accredited school undergo a financial review every year.</p> <p>A financial review by a licensed CPA or accounting firm independent of the school is required once every five years (in the year prior to the external accreditation review). (June 2020)</p>

Appendix B Annual Report

Each year, NCSA accredited schools are required to file an annual report. The steps are as follows:

- By February 1, each school's accreditation coordinator will receive an email from the NCSA Director of Accreditation asking for electronic responses to:
 - o NCSA Assurances only (See Appendix A)
 - o School Improvement Plan Goals and Progress

The school's responses are due by April 1.

Appendix C Appeal Process

If accreditation is not conferred on the school/school system, the school/school system remains as a candidate for accreditation. To achieve accreditation, the school/school system must meet the requirements specified in the External Review report within one year. It must submit documentation to NCSA which will make an accreditation recommendation for review and approval by the appropriate governing board. If the school/school system fails to meet the requirements specified in the External Review report, its candidacy status will be removed.

Appendix D Substantive Change

The NCSA considers any change to be substantive when it results in a modification of the nature and scope of the institution. If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact the Director of Accreditation for a ruling.

Because of this responsibility, and not with the intent of hindering the flexibility of institutional development or services to constituents, NCSA requires that prior to the implementation of changes of a substantive nature the institution must submit written notification to the Director of Accreditation and the Commissioner of the school. The notification will in turn be submitted to the NCSA Commissioners for final approval.

The notification submitted by the institution should include:

1. Rationale for the change, including an assessment of need.
2. Relationship of the change to the current purpose of the institution.
3. Documentation of legal authority for the change, if legal authorization is required by the city, state or by policies of the institution.
4. Timetable for implementation of the substantive change.
5. Identification of resources required to support the change, including but not limited to financial resources, physical facilities and equipment.
6. Personnel requirements.
7. Curriculum.

Upon approval of the original notification by NCSA the institution must arrange with their commissioner for a site visit during the first year of implementation and in the third year of the substantive change. These visits may be waived or modified by the NCSA Commissioners at their discretion. If at all possible the substantive change visit may coincide with the regular 5 year accreditation visit.

In the event that the substantive change is the addition of a grade or a campus, if deficiencies are identified during the substantive change visits and these deficiencies are not corrected within the designated time frame the school must revert to its original accredited grades or campus locations or lose accreditation status.

Proposed language follows:

Certain events in the life of a school make it necessary for a “substantive change” visit. It is the responsibility of the school to contact the offices of the National Christian School Association (NCSA) when a triggering event has occurred to begin the process. Failure to do so in a timely manner could result in a school being placed on “warned status” until the substantive change visit is made.

The list below is of events that will automatically trigger a substantive change visit:

- a change in the head of school (this also triggers the need for an audit);
- a change in the physical address of the school;
- adding a grade to the existing grades of the school (a visit should take place the year prior to the addition of 12th grade); or
- adding a satellite campus to the school.

The list below is of events that might trigger a substantive change visit to the school:

- an answer of “no” to any one of the NCSA assurances on the school’s annual report for more than one year;
- dropping a grade or consolidating two or more grades into a single classroom;
- closing a satellite campus of the school;
- being placed on “warned” or any other sanctioned status by an accrediting body other than the NCSA or by the state in those states where private schools are regulated;
- failure to complete an audit on the schedule called for in the accreditation policies;
- falling below fewer than three members on the school’s governing board; or
- having more than one teacher and/or administrator at a time on a mandatory timeline for completion of a degree required for accreditation (MA/MS for the head of school or BA, BS, BEd, for the faculty).
- having a major change in the direction or scope of the curriculum

According to the Manual of Accreditation, the cost of these visits (travel, meals and lodging) will be the responsibility of the school but no honorarium is expected or will be accepted for these visits.

After the visit is completed, the commissioner will make a recommendation to the full commission on the accreditation status of the school going forward. The options available to the commission on accreditation include:

- recommending the continuance of the school’s accreditation with no change in status; or
- recommending that the school be placed on “advised” status with a timetable for the school to remove that status through taking the proper actions.

Appendix E Code of Ethics and Conduct

Code of Ethics and Conduct

for Accreditation Teams and Chairs of the
National Christian School Association Accreditation Commission

The accreditation process is by nature, sensitive; objectivity and credibility are essential. The purpose of the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct (Code) of the National Christian School Association Board of Commissioners (NCSA) is to prevent both real and apparent conflicts of interest and/or unethical behavior by NCSA representatives, including staff.

NCSA Board of Commissioners, accreditation team chairs, accreditation team members (internal and external) and the NCSA staff shall conduct themselves at all times while representing NCSA as thoughtful, competent, well prepared, and impartial professionals. To assure schools and the public that NCSA reviews are impartial and objective, to avoid conflicts of interest and to promote equity and high ethical standards in the accreditation process, NCSA representatives shall follow the Code. They should exclude themselves from NCSA activities for any other reasons not listed in the Code that may represent an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

CODE OF ETHICS

The NCSA Board of Commissioners, accreditation team chairs, accreditation team members, and NCSA staff shall agree to adhere to the NCSA Code of Ethics.

Values-Based:

We act in ways that are fundamentally informed by biblical principles and best practices for Christian educators with an emphasis on: Christian character, integrity, service, leadership, innovation, collaboration, data-based decision making, and a focus on results.

Conflicts of Interest:

We conduct ourselves in a manner that seeks to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of a conflict of interest. We abide by the NCSA Conflict of Interest Policy.

Impartiality:

We treat all schools that are or may seek to become accredited with impartiality and courtesy.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

We hold all information obtained through schools' participation in the accreditation process as confidential and shall not disclose such information except in a manner that is pursuant with NCSA policies, governmental regulation, or judicial procedure. We respect the privacy rights of all individuals in the performance of NCSA duties.

Transparency:

We are committed to providing timely, complete, and accurate information to our schools and all stakeholders. All information about the organization will fully and honestly reflect the policies and practices of NCSA.

Legal Compliance:

We are knowledgeable of and comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and requirements.

Responsible Stewardship:

We manage NCSA and its resources responsibly and prudently, using NCSA resources only for NCSA purposes.

Inclusiveness and Diversity:

We promote and seek diversity in staff, board, volunteers, and in the schools and other clients we serve in order to enrich our effectiveness.

CODE OF CONDUCT

NCSA Board of Commissioners, accreditation team chairs, accreditation team members, and NCSA staff shall adhere to the NCSA Code of Conduct.

Bias

- Individuals shall not advance either personal agendas or non-NCSA-approved agendas in the conduct of accreditation reviews by attempting to apply personal or partisan interpretations of standards.
- Individuals shall examine the facts as they exist and not be influenced by past reputation, media accounts, etc., about schools being reviewed.
- Individuals shall exclude themselves from participating in NCSA activities if, to their knowledge, there is some predisposing factor that could prejudice them with respect to the accreditation of schools, partnerships, or approval of a professional organization's guidelines.
- Individuals assigned to a particular school must fully disclose to the NCSA office any activity that may be reasonably construed as a conflict of interest. If at any time during the administration of accreditation procedures a conflict of interest arises, the conflict must be immediately reported to the NCSA office.
- Failure to disclose conflict of interest or participation in an accreditation procedure that presents a conflict of interests can result in the offending person's removal from further participation in accreditation procedures.
- The accreditation team leader has full authority and discretion to remove any team member and to institute a replacement team member via established procedures. The NCSA Board of Commissioners has full authority and discretion to remove any team leader and to institute a replacement team leader via established procedures.

Compensation/Gifts

- NCSA Board of Commissioners, accreditation team chairs, accreditation team members and NCSA staff may not request or accept any compensation whatsoever or any gifts of substance from the school being reviewed or anyone affiliated with the school.
- If the giving of small tokens is important to a school's culture, members may accept these tokens from the school. (For example, coffee mugs, key chains, T-shirts, etc.)
- If unsure, the member should err on the side of declining gifts of any kind.
- Team members shall not expect elaborate hospitality during pre-visits or visits.
- The team chair shall make arrangements in advance with the school for team meals. Schools are not expected to arrange for elaborate meals. It is appropriate for schools to provide snacks and beverages for teams as they conduct their work at the school and at their hotel.
- Team members shall use restraint in any expenditures charged to the school being visited.
- Under no circumstance shall staff accept any personal compensation whatsoever or any gifts of substance from an NCSA school, though schools should pay for commissioner travel when they visit the schools under NCSA policy including substantive change visits.

Conflict of Interest

- No one shall participate in any decision-making capacity in the accreditation of a school if he/she has a close, active association with a school that is being considered for official action. A "decision-making capacity" includes serving on an accreditation team of a school being considered for accreditation or on the NCSA Board of Commissioners. A "close active association" includes:
 - having been a member of the faculty or staff or a student at the school within the past five years;
 - having an immediate family member attending or employed by the school;
 - having applied for a position at the school within the last five years;
 - having been a consultant either remunerated or pro bono at the school within five years;
- Accreditation team members are not eligible to participate on a team with family members (i.e. spouses, children, siblings, etc.).
- Commissioners shall leave meetings when the school that employs them is being discussed and when a vote is taken, other than routine renewals of accreditation without any advisement or warning status.
- The NCSA President shall not serve as an accreditation team member.

Consulting

When considering or accepting a consulting (or similar) arrangement with a school, NCSA Commissioners and NCSA staff shall:

be clear that they are not serving as NCSA's agent, but are providing their own professional expertise for consulting purposes,

inform the school that their advice and recommendations do not guarantee accreditation outcomes,

not solicit consultation arrangements with schools preparing for accreditation visits, not

advertise their status as commissioners for the purpose of building a consulting clientele, not

accept a consulting arrangement at a school for which the member served on the accreditation team for at least two years following the accreditation decision.

Under no circumstance shall commissioners accept fees from a school, though schools may pay for staff travel when they invite them to their schools. The NCSA President shall not serve as a paid consultant to an NCSA school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an integral part of the accreditation process. The NCSA Accreditation Commission, external review team members, and staff must have access to much sensitive information in order to conduct reviews of schools. The NCSA Accreditation Commission, external review team members, and staff must protect the confidentiality of this information. Confidentiality has no expiration date – it lasts forever.

- The NCSA Accreditation Commission, external review team members, and staff shall treat as confidential all elements of the NCSA accreditation process and information gathered as part of the process - documents, interviews, discussions, interpretations, and analyses - related to the review of schools.
- The NCSA Accreditation Commission, external review team members, and staff shall not discuss in public places the particulars of an on-site accreditation visit or the specifics of any case.
- Accreditation team members shall not discuss details about a school related to an accreditation visit with anyone other than team members before, during, or after the visit. Policy board members shall refrain from discussing the specifics of individual cases and decisions regarding programs with individuals who are not NCSA Board of Commissioners, accreditation team chairs, accreditation team members, and NCSA staff.
- Intellectual property rights of schools and school personnel shall be respected at all times. Forms, written policies and procedures, handbooks/manuals, or other documents shall not be requested for personal/professional use until after the site visit nor used by NCSA Chair and other Accreditation team members from other schools without proper permissions and/or attribution.

NCSA CODE OF ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT AGREEMENT

I hereby certify that I have read, understand, and will act in accordance with the NCSA Code of Ethics. I further state that I have read and understand the NCSA Conflict of Interest Policy, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, I do not have any interest nor will I take any action which would constitute a conflict of interest under such policy.

Violation of any part of the Code will result in the member's removal from the team.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Title _____

School/Organization _____ City, State, Zip _____