Inspire

Inspiring Schools to Flourish Through Accreditation

Standards Manual

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Contents

ACSI *Inspire* Standards Manual

Introduction

Accreditation by a well-recognized agency is both a seal of approval for an educational organization and a demonstration of the school's commitment to continuous improvement. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) promotes the value and worthiness of accreditation and encourages each school and early education program to clearly align their practices with their mission and philosophy. Visiting team members who are current or former Christian school educators bring an understanding of the accreditation standards and culturally competent insights to the school under review. We believe that this pursuit matches the biblical directive of approving "things that are excellent" (Philippians 1:10, KJV). Through the accreditation process, schools have the opportunity to assess if they are all they intend to be in academic ideas and real-world application of learning; values, character, and spiritual formation; student and staff well-being; and biblical worldview development. Accreditation documents that a school is true to its stated mission.

There are past, present, and future aspects to accreditation.

Past – Through the accreditation self-study process, a school takes an honest look at itself. Surveys and committees focus on various aspects of the school to review evidence. The goal is to identify strengths and weaknesses, not from general impressions it has about its program, but from actual evidence and how that compares to accreditation standards. An appropriate vision for the future begins with an honest assessment of where you have come from.

Present – Once the evidence has been examined, committees share their findings with the school leadership and an analysis is completed. The most important areas the school needs to address are identified and turned into improvement goals with prioritized action plans. Assisting the school in that process is a visiting team made up of peers who shares a commitment to excellent Christian education.

They read the school's self-study, review the evidence, and then compare it with what they see and hear through observations and interviews.

Future – As improvement planning permeates all levels of the school, finances, resources, hiring, and program development are impacted—and real change follows. Leaders will help staff, parents, and even students understand the mission and the community will unite around the preferred future that has been envisioned. I Timothy 4:15 (NIV) tells us to "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."

Accreditation has very practical benefits to the school and its community, as it:

- encourages a growth mindset and a focus on school improvement

- affirms credibility and accountability within a school's local community with a recognizable credential (Parents often look for accreditation as a criterion for choosing private schools.)

- allows for the smooth transfer of credits between other K-12 schools and, ultimately, full acceptance of credits at colleges and universities

- opens possibilities for scholarships, military academies, and other educational opportunities

- provides encouragement and structure for regular evaluation of teacher qualifications and professional development

- promotes networking and collaboration with other similar schools and educators as it uses a peer review model

- facilitates approval by the U.S. Department of Education for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) for international students, various U.S. state and several national recognitions for credits/athletics, and endorsement to administer College Board/ACT exams on-site at the school

- allows for recognition for early education programs

- provides recognition for state voucher or tax credit programs

- More than anything else, the very first reason, a growth mindset and a focus on school improvement, is why accreditation is so important! To highlight that, we came up with a new title.

Inspire, Inspiring Schools to Flourish Through Accreditation

From Webster's dictionary, to inspire means "to fill (someone) with the urge or ability to do or feel something, especially to do something creative." When referring to the Cambridge Dictionary, it adds the concept of "giving someone the confidence and desire to accomplish it." That's inspiration!

We asked a number of school leaders what accreditation does for them. We received answers such as "helps us meet high standards," "identifies what we should do next," "helps others see that we are excellent," and "helps us focus on school improvement." Our previous protocol was named REACH. We anticipated that it would help schools reach their potential but too often, they focused on reaching compliance with the standards as the goal. They failed to see accreditation as the stimulus to look beyond those standards and see themselves as what they might hope or dream they could be in the future. We wondered what would inspire a school to move from the mundane, compliance-oriented, check-the-box, "good enough" ideas that some associate with accreditation to something that inspires them to shoot for the truly transformative.

We also looked at ACSI's mission …

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

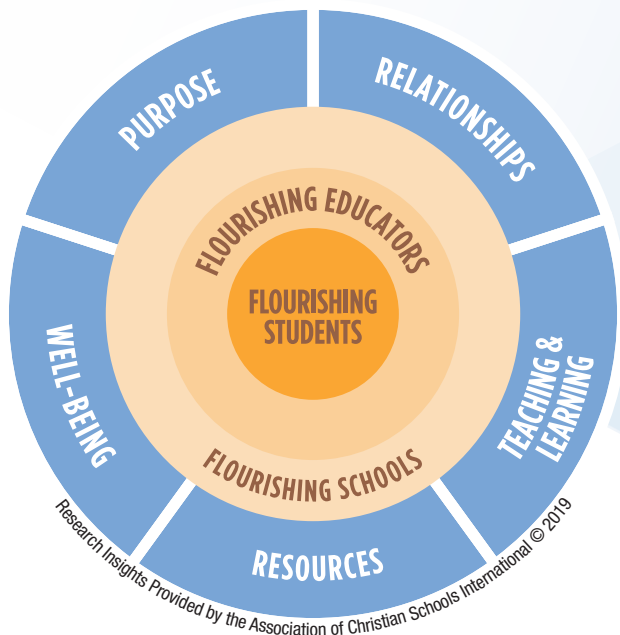… and were reminded of ACSI's desire to inspire from that foundational statement.

Three things come to mind both for individuals and for schools:

- Passion. When you connect your heart with what you truly want to do, you get a passion to make it happen. You become inspired to work at it with all your heart. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23)

- Imagination. ACSI staff and the chairperson assigned to the school will help the school envision what it would look like if these goals were to become reality within a few years. We need to help schools imagine a new future, one with growth realized. Leaders, artists, and especially athletes will tell you that they work hard, but right before the big competition, they imagine or envision the steps, down to every movement necessary, to see it realized when the opportunity comes to fruition. Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

- Possibilities. ACSI staff and particularly the visiting team believes in the school, helps them see the pathway, and makes concrete recommendations to help them get there. Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." (Luke 18:27) Schools may be tired or out of ideas by the time they get to the end of the accreditation process. Our job is to help them see that a bright future is not just wild imagination, it is attainable. We have the privilege of serving as coach and cheerleader. Others have done it. They can do it, too.

That is *INSPIRATION*! We can realize the goal of "Inspiring Schools to Flourish Through Accreditation." This title isn't just a word. This new accreditation process will inspire schools. Our new standards and the process we employ will help them ignite a passion, imagine a bright future, and see that it is possible to get there.

How does Accreditation fit into the Flourishing School Culture Model?

A flourishing school culture is a community consisting of healthy spiritual, emotional, and cultural characteristics. ACSI developed the Flourishing School Culture Model (FSCM) to provide a framework to measure community strengths and weaknesses and help schools create an action plan to see transformational results. The research identified 35 validated constructs that were organized into five primary domains. The Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI), which undergirds the research, draws input from seven groups of individuals in the school community to give a well-rounded view of the school culture. The FSCM and FSCI underwent a rigorous independent review process by a Cardus Senior Fellow, who endorsed the FSCI as a "conceptually and technically sound" tool that offers "a multi-dimensional view of a school's culture from a variety of perspectives."

As you can see from the model, these can be applied to schools, educators, and students. The survey results from the FSCI yields rich data that can inform schools on how they are doing in many aspects that touch areas of accreditation. Those results may inform the school's Accreditation Action Plan, which will
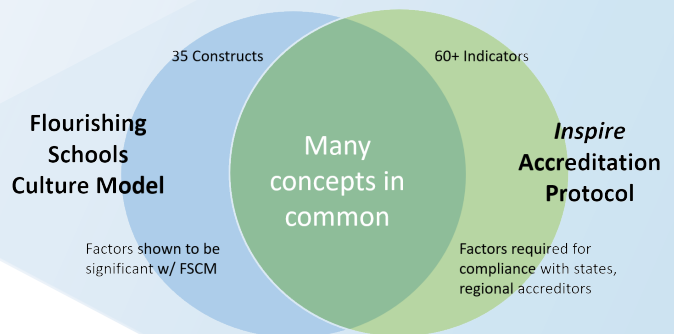
be formed as a result of all other surveys and the conclusions that are drawn at the end of the accreditation process.

Inspire has organized its indicators into the same domains as the FSCM. While Expertise and Resources are part of the same domain in the Flourishing School Culture Model, they are split out in the *Inspire* protocol.

The six *Inspire* Domains:

- Purpose
- Relationships
- Teaching and Learning
- Expertise
- Resources
- Well-being

Accreditation covers other areas of inquiry in addition to the 35 constructs from the FSCM. For example, there are some basic areas of compliance that help keep students safe. These show up in areas such as Standards 16 and 18, and some of them are included on the Standard 11 Checklist (legal and ethical compliance issues). Another example where accreditation adds more detail than the FSCM is in the area of Teaching and Learning, where accreditation has specific requirements for curriculum documentation.

While there is excellent alignment (see Appendix G - *Inspire* and FSCM Alignment) between the two instruments, they do not have the same function, nor do they use the same process. The FSCM is based on a thorough survey that gathers perception data from seven constituent groups. This is better and more conclusive than most surveys. The accreditation process uses a multi-part process that includes several other types of input in addition to surveys:

- School self-study which includes use of surveys, ratings of 60+ indicators based on evidence and data (such as assessment results, enrollment trends, financial documents, etc.). The analysis of these three types of evidence and the comparison of those results is called "triangulation of data."

- Team visit by a group of peer educators, many of whom are from similar accredited schools. The team reviews the self-study, conducts on-site observations and interviews, and reviews the evidence provided by the school. They, too, complete a "triangulation of data" to make sure that the conclusions they come to are accurate. Near the end of the visit, they collaborate with the school's leadership team to help create an appropriate *Accreditation Action Plan* for school improvement.

The connection with the FSCM continues once the school and team finalize the *Accreditation Action Plan*. Since all the recommendations will be organized by domain, it will be clear where to find relevant ACSI resources and opportunities for professional development that relate to these same areas.

How to use this manual: (for the head of school or the school coordinator)

1. Read through the opening pages of this manual and share them with your steering committee.

2. Share these introductory pages with the leaders of each domain committee so that they understand the whole picture. It is easier for them to fit their individual task into the whole picture if they have been able to see the bigger view. Each domain committee will also need the pages that cover their domain.

3. Use some of these concepts with the entire staff in an opening assembly to share the reasons for accreditation with them. They will be inspired to do their part well if they understand the benefit to the entire school community.

4. Use the various sections in creative ways throughout the entire cycle of accreditation. For example, there are several ways that the Leadership Section could be used. Read through it and try one or two of the ideas each year. Another example would be to work with a group of teachers to look at the standards that pertain to teaching and learning. Ask them to help you construct a teacher evaluation instrument or classroom evaluation process (for students to complete at the end-of-term) which would give you pertinent information on how those standards and indicators are being met. These ideas could promote investment on the part of the staff to be an integral part of the process.

5. Create a system for monitoring your *Accreditation Action Plan* that also builds your mid-level and developing leaders' capacity. This will keep several things in place between accreditation cycles:

   a. Each division at your school can take ownership of the action plan(s) related to their area rather than waiting to address it until the next cycle of accreditation.

   b. Assigning the action plan(s) to individuals or groups who are most closely connected to the work, and holding them accountable, is a great way to develop their capacity to take on additional responsibility when the need arises. They will be in the habit of convening small groups, meeting deadlines, and reporting to the person to whom they are responsible. They can also report back to the faculty at each division and communicate progress that is occurring. Some schools call these "School Improvement Teams" that meet regularly (quarterly, etc.) throughout every year. It is an easy way to continue the momentum created by the accreditation process and to distribute the workload among several school leaders. Research shows that developing leaders want to be included in shared leadership roles when possible, and this is a great way to do that.

6. Change your mindset from only gathering evidence because it is required by outsiders to an attitude of wanting to "examine what we do internally because we want to improve!" An example might be how you conduct your faculty meetings or your leadership team meetings. Periodically, you might examine each one of your expected student outcomes and brainstorm on how it is being accomplished in each discipline and how that could be documented. If you set aside a few minutes at each meeting, you could review all of them in the course of a year. You would have great raw material for thinking about how those could be assessed. The following year, you might do the same thing, but move those notes from brainstorming ideas to more definite assessments. Another example might be biblical worldview development. A different department could be encouraged each month to share a few examples of how biblical worldview is taught, developed, and assessed in their classes. The notes of those short presentations over the course of several years would create amazing evidence! But it wouldn't be nearly as impactful as all the other teachers listening to the ideas of their peers!

The Process

A successful accreditation process depends on the investment of time and energy by the entire faculty and staff. It starts with obtaining the materials in a timely fashion. After the application, this manual with the standards and indicators is the most important document. It is essential that the leadership team read through this manual to understand what ACSI accreditation means and how the process will put your school on a path of school improvement.

Secondly, the timeline is extremely important. Accreditation has several phases. Each one requires the appropriate amount of time in order for the process to have the desired effect. The long-term goal of accreditation is school improvement. If the timeline is shortened, it is less likely that the school will be able to learn what it needs to know about itself and that will have a negative impact on the whole process. In a similar way, if the visiting team doesn't get the report and evidence it needs in a timely fashion, their work will not be as helpful to the school as it could be otherwise.

Thirdly, the school leadership has choices to make regarding who will lead the accreditation process at several levels. The most important choice is who will be school coordinator for the accreditation process. This person should be respected by the school community, able to manage a multi-stage project, and have a good grasp of how to lead many people toward a single goal. In some schools, the head of school assigns a principal or someone like a director of curriculum. However, occasionally the head of school may decide to manage this process himself/herself. The secondary leaders are those who will lead the subcommittees. These subcommittees are described in the School Coordinator's Handbook. These appointments are also key because they make up the steering committee for the entire process as well as managing one domain or specific aspect. Since the final result of this process is a document with many pieces of evidence, the people chosen must have writing, editing, technology, organizational, and collaboration skills. It is incumbent on the head of school to show appreciation for the school coordinator's commitment and personal sacrifice.

The *School Coordinator's Handbook* is written specifically for the person who is assigned to lead the accreditation process. It is essential that the coordinator obtains that document early and follows it closely. It contains information on the timeline and responsibilities of those involved. The self-study process is clearly described in that handbook as well. We recommend that the school coordinator obtains the handbook at least 18 months prior to the desired date of the visit; however, many schools start planning two years in advance.

Finally, regardless of who is chosen to lead the process, the head of school needs to champion the process of accreditation to the community. He/she needs to fully understand why the school needs to be accredited and why it is

important to use a faith-based accreditor. The "Why Is This Important" statements and the section on Leadership in this manual will help with that understanding. As the leader of the school, his/her support will be crucial in gaining the cooperation of the rest of the faculty and staff who must do the work of gathering data, evaluating evidence, drafting the report, and collaborating on the goals for improvement near the end of the process. If staff feel that the leader has passed it off to others, morale will suffer and the whole process may not achieve its desired effect. The leader will also want to explain the accreditation process to the governing body so that they will also be on board and participate in the process.

Once the self-study is complete, the school will host a visiting team of peer Christian school educators. The visiting team will provide a written report. Near the end of the visiting team report will be a list of Major Commendations as well as Accreditation Action Items for the school. The Accreditation Action Items are the areas for growth, identified collaboratively by the school and the team, the school will use to build their *Accreditation Action Plan*. These items are important for the continuous improvement cycle of the school; however, a temptation for many schools may be to focus only on the Accreditation Action Items. Swaner, Dodds, and Lee (2021) caution schools against missing the "important cultural gains to be had from also taking a strengths-based approach" (p. 30). While specifically written to schools who have completed ACSI's Flourishing School Culture Instrument, the advice is applicable to schools who complete the accreditation process as well. ACSI would encourage schools not to overlook the Major Commendations, the strengths identified by the visiting team. Swaner et al. provide two ways for schools to build on their strengths: 1) Communicate strengths (to both internal and external stakeholders) and 2) Use strengths to serve as a catalyst for change. The school's strengths are certainly a cause for celebration!

When the visiting team has come and gone, and the school has received their final report from the commission, the head of school will want to make sure the following steps are addressed:

1. Read the entire visiting team report, with the governing body, administration, and faculty, making sure that departments have access to sections that most closely pertain to them.

2. Celebrate accreditation or reaccreditation with your constituents by posting the status on your website and sharing it through other appropriate means of communication once you receive the official word.

3. Complete the *Accreditation Action Items* based on the goals discussion that took place during the visit with specific information regarding resources needed, timelines, actions to be taken, and metrics for success. This action plan must be submitted to the ACSI divisional office with the school's next annual report.

4. Respond to the Annual Reports as required, providing updates on the school's Accreditation Action Plan.

5. Periodically review the recommendations at the domain level in the report and discuss those internally with the appropriate departments.

6. Create an ongoing system for maintenance of standards and indicators for continued progress on the school's *Accreditation Action Plan*.

Conclusion

Once you realize that accreditation requires a growth mindset, it not only becomes easier, but it also becomes more effective.

We are what we repeatedly do, therefore excellence is not an act, but a habit. ~ Aristotle
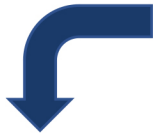
Accreditation Process Snapshot

School completes Self-Study:
The school reflects on effectiveness, articulates strengths and areas for improvement, and creates Prioritized Goals for Improvement

School hosts visiting team of peer Christian educators:
Team visits classrooms, interviews stakeholders, collaborates with the school around the school's Prioritized Goals for Improvement and team findings, creates a Visiting Team Report including Major Commendations and articulates Accreditation Action Items.

School creates the Accreditation Action Plan:
The Accreditation Action Plan (which includes all Accreditation Action Items from the Visiting Team Report), is submitted with the Annual Report

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'Why is This Important?' Statements with Supporting Scripture

All accreditors must cover certain concepts to do a comprehensive job of the accreditation process. A secular and a faith-based standard may look similar, and yet the rationale or motivation for including that standard might be different. The "Why is this important?" statements articulate ACSI's rationale or motivation for including each of our standards. These statements seek to answer the following questions to provide a more nuanced look at the standard from a faith-based perspective:

- What is the faith-based perspective on this standard?
- How might Christian educators do this differently?
- Why are these important to ACSI?
- What insight does the Scripture cited have to offer?

As the head of school or school coordinator, how could you use these statements?

- Share them with your steering committee.
- Share them with the leaders of each domain committee so they can see the faith-based rationale behind each standard.
- Use these with the entire staff in an opening assembly. Staff will be inspired by the Scriptural bases.
- Review these "Why Statements" periodically to remind your staff and greater school community why they do what they do. As political and societal pressures change over the next few years, these "Why Statements" will keep the *Inspire* protocol grounded in God's word and in truth.

Universal Rubric

The *Inspire* protocol was designed to encourage schools to focus on the goal or objective of each standard, with the indicators defining how a school could effectively meet each standard. In the past, detailed rubrics were provided for each indicator and those may have led some to focus on the nuts and bolts rather than on the standard or indicator as a whole. The universal rubric supplied for indicators in *Inspire* will hopefully lead users to consider the principles involved rather than specific details.

As evidence is reviewed, the universal rubric can be used to analyze how effective the school is in light of the indicator. This gives schools a little more freedom to demonstrate how they meet the objective and what evidence to provide. We understand that in a few cases, additional requirements are needed. In those cases, documents will provide additional information, and a hyperlink will be attached to the indicator. Schools and teams will be expected to refer to those additional requirements. Some words will be hyperlinked to the glossary and schools and teams may find additional clarity from that.

- Once the school/team has reviewed the relevant evidence, it is best to evaluate the indicator against the description in the "Effective" column in the universal rubric. Many of the items listed in the "Effective" column will apply for most concepts in the protocol, but not all. For example, not everything requires a written policy or training, but many things do.

- If the trait or concept being evaluated meets all the criteria in the "Effective" column, then look to the right at "Highly Effective." If the criteria there mostly applies, then "Highly Effective" is probably the correct rating. However, if only a few of those "Highly Effective" aspects are true, then you will probably decide the "Effective" rating is the better choice.

- The same process would be appropriate for lower ratings. If not quite everything is true for "Effective," look to the left to see if "Somewhat Effective" is actually the better description.

- You may see that some criteria of one box and some of another box are true. Decide which box provides the better description or is closer to reality than the other and use that rating. Since this is a universal rubric, not every aspect might apply. The correct way to use the rubric is to select the box that BEST describes the evidence that has been reviewed.

1	2	3	4
Ineffective	*Somewhat Effective*	*Effective*	*Highly Effective*
• The trait either doesn't exist or is rarely observed. • If it does exist, there may be some significant problems in this area. • Needs improvement to meet the basic standard.	• The trait is not consistently observed, or by only some teachers/staff. • There are no significant deficiencies, but this area needs improvement. • Policies may be in practice but not in writing, or may be in writing but not implemented consistently. • Training is inconsistent.	• The trait is observed consistently in its implementation. • Policies are found in writing and implemented consistently. • Results are documented and communicated, and items are reviewed regularly. • Training occurs as needed. • A review process has been developed.	• The trait is consistent across levels and faculty. • The trait is well-supervised for fidelity and there is care in implementation by leadership. • Staff go above and beyond requirements. • Results are consistently documented, evaluated, communicated, and used for school improvement. • Training is regular/ongoing. • Related policies are regularly reviewed, carefully implemented, and updated as needed.

Inspire Standards and Indicators

PURPOSE DOMAIN	
Standard 1: **Mission, Beliefs, and Foundations**	**The school operates from a written mission and statement of faith that outline its biblical foundations and beliefs. The school identifies and assesses its expected student outcomes and uses results to drive decisions throughout operations and programs.**
Why is this important?	*"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Foundational documents identify the underlying principles upon which the Christian school is established. The mission, based on biblical principles, provides direction and purpose for the organization. Expected Student Outcomes bring the foundational values to life and chart the course for every area of school programs. (Habakkuk 2:2, Matthew 22:36-40, Matthew 28:19-20, John 17:17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)*
	• Indicator 1.1: The school's mission, statement of faith, expected student outcomes, and any other foundational documents are written, collaboratively and systematically reviewed for effectiveness, and communicated to its stakeholders. • Indicator 1.2: The school's mission is evident throughout the programs, operations, and curriculum and is promoted by the leadership. • Indicator 1.3: The school's admissions criteria and program expectations are clearly communicated to ensure alignment with its mission and goals. • Indicator 1.4: The school assesses its academic and non-academic expected student outcomes and uses results to drive decisions throughout operations and programs.

Standard 2: **Spiritual Formation and Biblical Worldview Development**	**The school facilitates spiritual formation of students, provides opportunities for discipleship and outreach, and fosters the development of a biblical worldview. Spiritual growth toward maturity in Christ is a priority throughout school programs, is regularly assessed, and is modeled by faculty and staff.**
Why is this important?	*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Worldview determines the lens through which the world is seen, impacting values and life decisions. The goal of Christian education is to train students to think biblically and articulate their faith. Discipleship and mentoring provide opportunities for demonstrations of care, compassion, and respect for others reflecting Christlikeness. (Colossians 1:9-18, Colossians 2:8, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 2:12-13, Hebrews 5:14, 2 Peter 1:3, 5-8)*
	• Indicator 2.1: The school intentionally cultivates a biblical worldview and spiritual formation through school programs, assesses the effectiveness of those programs, and uses the results for program improvement. • Indicator 2.2: Spiritual formation includes the development of Christian character through discipleship, mentoring, and outreach opportunities. • Indicator 2.3: Faculty and staff model active church participation and encourage church involvement among students and families.

Standard 3: Governance and School Leadership	The school has a Christ-centered governing body that functions within clearly defined roles and responsibilities, establishes governance policies, participates in strategic planning, and advances organizational effectiveness. The head of school works collaboratively with school leadership to implement policies and procedures, support effective instructional practices, and drive school improvement.
Why is this important?	*"Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly…because you are eager to serve God." (1 Peter 5:2) Effective leadership builds trusting relationships and understands that human capital makes the biggest impact on a successful school. Leading from the heart attracts, develops, and inspires everyone in the school community to achieve their best. (Exodus 18:21, Luke 22:25-28, Romans 13:1, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossians 1:4-5, Colossians 3:17)*
	• Indicator 3.1: The school has established a Christ-centered governing body that reflects a clear commitment to the mission and biblical foundations of the school. The governing body engages in systematic orientation for new members, self-evaluation, and professional development concerning governance best practices. • Indicator 3.2: The governing body develops, implements, and systematically reviews its written policies and procedures contained in their policy manual. They make informed and responsible decisions to advance organizational effectiveness, participate in strategic and succession planning, ensure the financial stability of the school, and review the accomplishment of the mission of the school. • Indicator 3.3: Governing body policies establish a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between itself and the head of school. Practices demonstrate that relationships and scope of authority are well defined and function appropriately. The head of school is the organizational link between the governing body and the school. (See Guidelines and Requirements for Governance) • Indicator 3.4: The governing body conducts a clearly defined and written evaluation of the head of school that is administered annually with his/her participation. The evaluation is designed to improve leadership capacity, professional practice, and organizational effectiveness. • Indicator 3.5: The head of school oversees day-to-day operations of the school and works collaboratively with school leadership to develop, implement, and communicate policies and procedures; support effective instructional practices; and drive school improvement. • Indicator 3.6: School leadership collaboratively reflects on their team's effectiveness and develops plans for growth as appropriate for the leadership team structure. (See Appendix A- Leadership Section)

RELATIONSHIPS DOMAIN	
Standard 4: **Caring Environment and Positive School Culture**	**The school develops a Christlike culture in which staff and students demonstrate respect, sensitivity, and responsiveness to individual needs and differences.**
Why is this important?	*"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble." (I Peter 3:8) Students flourish in a positive school culture that provides a supportive, encouraging, and challenging environment. When working and learning with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, students become better equipped to engage their world with a global perspective. (Micah 6:8, Matthew 7:12, Mark 12:33, Ephesians 4:2-4, Colossians 4:5-6)*
	• Indicator 4.1: The school fosters a Christlike culture characterized by a compassionate, caring, and respectful environment that is sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and cultures, as well as varying needs, of each student and family. • Indicator 4.2: The school fosters a culture in which students are known and supported through intentional connections with faculty and staff. • Indicator 4.3: The school has established written policy, based upon biblical principles, for resolving conflicts.

Standard 5: **Stakeholder Engagement**	**The school engages stakeholders in ways that develop community, promote accountability, and improve institutional effectiveness.**
Why is this important?	*"Live in harmony with one another." (Romans 12:16) Open communication with families in the school community allows for mutual support, fosters clear expectations, and gives a deeper sense of belonging. When families and community members are engaged, students participate in their education more fully and gain advocates that encourage their success. (Proverbs 18:2 and 13, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 4:1-3)*
	• Indicator 5.1: Regular and effective two-way communication between school personnel and stakeholders promotes a culture of participation, transparency, and accountability. • Indicator 5.2: The school collects stakeholder feedback and data, including survey and demographic data, and conducts analyses to improve instructional and operational practices. • Indicator 5.3: Collaboration is valued and cultivated in the school culture. Faculty and staff members are invited to participate through perspectives, ideas, and solutions to improve institutional effectiveness while promoting a sense of community.

Standard 6: Community Engagement	The school provides opportunities to engage with local, national, and global communities in ways that make a positive impact on students and build relationships outside of school.
Why is this important?	*Community engagement builds deeper, stronger, and more trusting relationships between the school and the community. This increases the recognition and understanding of important issues that contribute to mutual support and growth. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4) (Matthew 5:16, John 13:35, Acts 1:8)*
	• Indicator 6.1: The school networks and engages with the surrounding community and local ministries, as appropriate. • Indicator 6.2: The school connects with national or global communities to provide opportunities for students to serve as appropriate. • Indicator 6.3: Students are positively impacted by their engagement with local, national, and/or global communities.

TEACHING and LEARNING DOMAIN

Standard 7: Instructional Program	**The school provides an instructional program that promotes a <u>biblical worldview</u>; supports the school's <u>expected student outcomes</u>; and fosters high student engagement, critical thinking, and academic growth.**
Why is this important?	*At the heart of an excellent academic institution is a highly effective instructional program that closely aligns to the school's foundational documents. The teaching/learning process utilizes best practices, integrates biblically based learning experiences, and challenges learners to merge knowledge with wisdom in reaching their God-given potential. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2) (Daniel 1:19-20, Philippians 1:9-12, Philippians 2:5, Colossians 3:23-24, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)*
	• Indicator 7.1: The school provides a biblically based instructional program that integrates a <u>biblical worldview</u> throughout each discipline. • Indicator 7.2: The school incorporates a variety of challenging, collaborative, motivational, learner-centered, and authentic learning experiences to promote student engagement and independence. • Indicator 7.3: A variety of teaching techniques and research-based instructional strategies are implemented, monitored for effectiveness, and adjusted to meet individual interests and ability levels. • Indicator 7.4: The school implements current uses of technology to enhance teaching and learning and to prepare students for future academic and career success. • Indicator 7.5: The instructional program includes Bible as a required core subject. The school places a similar emphasis on Bible instruction as in other core subjects, incorporating engaging learning experiences and instructional strategies. • Indicator 7.6: Instruction and programs provided by outside personnel meet safety and instructional guidelines established by the school, including the incorporation of a <u>biblical worldview</u>. (See <u>Guidelines for Instruction from Outside Sources</u> and for <u>Outside Contracted Teachers</u>)

Standard 8: Curriculum Planning	**The school develops, implements, and maintains <u>curriculum documentation</u> across grade levels and subject areas that effectively supports quality instruction.**
Why is this important?	*"The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance …" (Proverbs 21:5a) The curriculum guide captures the essence of information within the scope of a particular course or subject, containing essential questions and key concepts, to prepare learners for success. It serves as a current and accessible roadmap of instruction to guide students along their spiritual and educational journey. (1 Chronicles 28:19, Psalm 33:11, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 24:27)*
	• Indicator 8.1: Comprehensive <u>curriculum documentation</u> is utilized to provide clear instructional guidance across grade levels and subject areas. (See <u>Appendix B - Curriculum Documentation Requirements</u>.) • Indicator 8.2: <u>Curriculum documentation</u> demonstrates the alignment of content standards, objectives, instructional activities, and <u>assessments</u>. (See <u>Appendix B - Curriculum Documentation Requirements</u>.) • Indicator 8.3: <u>Curriculum documentation</u> is updated regularly through a collaborative review process.

Standard 9: Assessment and Use of Learning Data	The school conducts and analyzes varied and authentic assessments to monitor and evaluate student learning. The school then utilizes results to inform decision making.
Why is this important?	*As part of the teaching and learning process, teachers continually assess and make adjustments to ensure that each student's educational needs are met. Analysis of data enables teachers to make quality decisions that impact daily instructional practices, promoting student growth. "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment." (Philippians 1:9) (Psalm 92:12, Proverbs 11:14, 2 Peter 1:5-8)*
	• Indicator 9.1: The school systematically collects data from a range of assessments. The school provides feedback to students and communicates assessment results to stakeholders as appropriate. (See Appendix C - Assessments) • Indicator 9.2: The school analyzes student assessment data including progress of individual students, schoolwide trends, and disaggregation of data in meaningful ways. Teachers are trained to understand applicable assessment data. (See Appendix C - Assessments) • Indicator 9.3: Teachers effectively utilize assessment data for improving classroom instruction to achieve student outcomes. Instructional leaders use assessment results to inform educational decisions and drive long-range planning.(See Appendix C - Assessments)

Standard 10: Professional Development and Evaluation	The school plans and implements a coordinated program of professional development and evaluation that results in improved professional practice and increased student achievement.
Why is this important?	*Lifelong learning, a growth mindset, and a focus on improvement are hallmarks of a maturing teacher and a flourishing school. Intentional continuous professional development stems from a healthy culture where staff desire to better fulfill their calling as educators and further the mission and vision of the school. Enhancing scriptural understanding and professional practices equips staff to "carry out every good work" for the benefit of the entire school community. (Proverbs 15:22, Malachi 4:2, Colossians 1:28-29, Colossians 2:2-3, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:14)*
	• Indicator 10.1: The school's professional development program encourages a growth mindset among faculty and school leadership, focusing on best practices and meeting student needs. The professional development program includes training in the Bible, biblical integration, and Christian philosophy of education. • Indicator 10.2: A systematic and collaborative process for evaluation of school leadership and instructional staff includes clearly communicated criteria, written goals, and growth plans appropriate for each position. Integration of a biblical worldview is included in the evaluation of instructional staff. • Indicator 10.3: Professional development and teacher evaluation processes result in effective instructional practices that promote increased student achievement.

EXPERTISE DOMAIN*	
Standard 11: **Legal and Ethical Compliance**	**The school complies with applicable laws and regulations, while not compromising the biblical foundations of the school, and implements written policies to promote institutional effectiveness.**
Why is this important?	*"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established." (Romans 13:1) Abiding by legal requirements is important for upholding biblical values, maintaining a witness for Christ, and protecting students and staff. Transparency and accountability build trust with legal authorities, employees, parents, students, and the community at large. (Proverbs 19:20, Titus 3:1-2)*
	Every accreditation protocol must verify required elements for schools. Some of these items are included because they significantly impact the health and safety of students and others are included because they affect the organizational effectiveness of the school. Many are required by state law or other authorities. Examples of items that must be addressed are fire drills, background checks, and grievance policies (see the Standard 11 Checklist for a complete list). These items will be assembled by a school and shared with the visiting team chair either in person, or in a virtual format, during a pre-visit, allowing more time to be spent on conversations that promote school improvement during the actual team visit.

Standard 12:	
Standard 12: **Staff Qualifications and Human Resources**	**The school maintains human resource policies and implements practices that ensure the employment, management, and evaluation of qualified and competent Christian personnel to enhance organizational effectiveness.**
Why is this important?	*"The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." (Luke 6:40 NIV) A truly excellent faculty combines competence in their teaching with a heart to serve. Christian schools that create and nurture a healthy professional culture based on biblical principles will encourage longevity and passion for educating the next generation. (2 Corinthians 3:4-5, 1 Timothy 4:12, James 3:1)*
	• Indicator 12.1: The school requires all employees to provide evidence of a clear testimony of faith in Christ and agreement with the school's statement of faith and code of ethics. • Indicator 12.2: The school ensures that all personnel are qualified for their positions or roles within the school. Faculty and school leadership meet current ACSI requirements for certification/licensing or an approved alternative. (See Meeting Indicator 12.2) • Indicator 12.3: The school engages in succession planning and the development of emerging leaders. (See Succession Planning & Leadership Development) • Indicator 12.4: The school provides a written annual evaluation of non-instructional staff, with appropriate training and follow-up to enhance growth and development. • Indicator 12.5: The school maintains written human resource policies that reflect current law, implements ethical employment practices, delivers applicable training, and provides appropriate supervision of all staff. • Indicator 12.6: School leadership ensures staff members know and understand the professional and ethical expectations of their respective positions (such as personal boundaries, conflicts of interest, copyright infringement, confidentiality, etc.).

Standard 13: Student Support Services	The school provides advising and support services that assist students in preparing for future success while considering the unique needs of each student.
Why is this important?	*Since each student is created by God with unique abilities and needs (Psalm 139:14), guidance and support services empower students to discover their unique learning styles and provide them with a pathway for success. These services encourage students through key stages of their development and prepare them for future success as they grow "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2:52) (Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 33:3, Ephesians 2:10, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)*
	• Indicator 13.1: The school prepares students for a successful transition between grade levels and division levels. • Indicator 13.2: The school provides opportunities for exploration of careers and academic counseling to prepare students for future success. • Indicator 13.3: The school has a process in place to identify and address the individual spiritual, academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.

* Expertise and Resources are part of the same domain in the Flourishing School Culture Model. They were divided into separate domains for the ACSI *Inspire* accreditation protocol to provide clarity for this particular function, but Flourishing School or Professional Development resources provided by ACSI for Expertise and Resources will be part of the same domain.

RESOURCES DOMAIN*	
Standard 14: **Financial Oversight**	**The school operates with integrity through sound financial practices that promote institutional effectiveness and financial stability.**
Why is this important?	*"An overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach and be found trustworthy." (Titus 1:7) Good stewardship of resources enables a school to govern and operate effectively while educating students with excellence. Financial transparency and integrity build trust and accountability between leadership and the school community. (Proverbs 10:9, Titus 3:8, Hebrews 13:18, 1 Peter 4:10)*
	• Indicator 14.1: Financial policies and procedures are established and implemented to guide all financial operations and business practices with integrity and in accordance with biblical principles. Financial and business oversight is entrusted to those who possess the appropriate qualifications or experience. • Indicator 14.2: The school equitably budgets for personnel, facilities, and resources. The budget is carefully constructed with appropriate input and prioritizes the funding of student outcomes. • Indicator 14.3: The school's finances are reviewed* by an independent CPA who has no vested interest in the school. The findings and recommendations are used to improve systems and operations, as appropriate. (*See Meeting Indicator 14.3)

Standard 15:	
Standard 15: **Resource Planning**	**The school engages in long-range planning to maintain viability, provide sufficient resources, and ensure appropriate staffing to fulfill the school's mission.**
Why is this important?	*Schools that prioritize planning will be better positioned for vitality and long-term health as they provide an optimal environment for the growth and development of well-rounded students. High quality planning demonstrates visionary leadership and faithful stewardship of God's provisions. "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Proverbs 16:9) (Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 6:6-8)*
	• Indicator 15.1: The governing body and school leadership engage in long-range planning, using enrollment trends and financial models, to promote school viability and longevity. • Indicator 15.2: The governing body and school leadership provide fair and equitable compensation for staff members. Compensation levels promote employee well-being and aid in retention and recruitment of qualified staff.

Standard 16: Facilities and Transportation	The school provides facilities that are safe, secure, well-maintained, and adequate to fulfill the school's mission. Facilities and transportation, as provided, operate according to applicable legal and safety requirements.
Why is this important?	"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1) Well-designed and well-maintained school facilities provide a welcoming environment conducive to active learning, positive behavior, and student engagement. Safe and secure transportation also contributes to an enriching educational experience. (Proverbs 21:20, Proverbs 24:27, Matthew 25:21, 1 Corinthians 14:40, Titus 3:1)
	• Indicator 16.1: The school facilities are safe, secure, and well-maintained. Written procedures regarding facility maintenance are routinely implemented with appropriate documentation. Facilities are organized and developmentally appropriate for the students served. • Indicator 16.2: Transportation policies and procedures are documented, implemented, and monitored.

Standard 17: Instructional Resources	The school curates and provides instructionally appropriate resources to support and enhance the educational program.
Why is this important?	"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!" (Proverbs 16:16) Students' hearts, minds, and imaginations are engaged when instructional resources are challenging, rigorous, multi-sensory, and bring diverse perspectives into the conversation. Materials that bring content to life assist teachers in providing a more complete learning experience. Well-chosen resources can help students connect concepts to reality and further develop their worldview. (Psalm 119:1-2 and 130, Proverbs 4:13, Philippians 4:19)
	• Indicator 17.1: The school identifies and provides appropriate physical and digital instructional resources that prepare students for success at the next educational level. • Indicator 17.2: Instructional resources include those with biblical and global perspectives. • Indicator 17.3: Staff and students are trained to responsibly utilize instructional resources that support teaching and learning.

* Expertise and Resources are part of the same domain in the Flourishing School Culture Model. They were divided into separate domains for the ACSI *Inspire* accreditation protocol to provide clarity for this particular function, but Flourishing School or Professional Development resources provided by ACSI for Expertise and Resources will be part of the same domain.

WELL-BEING DOMAIN

Standard 18: Health and Safety	The school operates from written policies and procedures that ensure the health and safety of staff, students, and campus visitors.
Why is this important?	Schools that are attentive to health and safety demonstrate their love for students and staff in a tangible way. Vigilant commitment to the ongoing awareness and management of risk shows competence and integrity to the school's stakeholders. "You are my place of safety and protection. You are my God and I will trust in you." (Psalm 91:2) (Leviticus 25:18, Psalm 91:1-4, Proverbs 11:14)
	• Indicator 18.1: A comprehensive written security and crisis management plan has been developed, implemented, regularly reviewed, and supported by appropriate training for all staff, students, and volunteers. The plan includes a strategy for communication with legal authorities and stakeholders in the event of a crisis. • Indicator 18.2: Policies and procedures that promote social and emotional health and safety both prevent and address situations including harassment, intimidation, and bullying, with clearly defined conduct expectations for students, staff, parents, and volunteers. The school provides appropriate training on harassment, intimidation, and bullying for staff and students. • Indicator 18.3: The school has developed child safety policies and procedures that address child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, as well as legal/mandated reporting responsibilities for staff and volunteers. Training and conduct expectations for students, staff, and volunteers are clearly established.

Standard 19: Staff Wellness	The school provides all personnel with a Christ-centered work environment, appropriate support, and encouragement to pursue a healthy lifestyle.
Why is this important?	*A healthy, Christ-centered work environment allows employees to thrive socially, emotionally, and professionally and fosters creativity, collaboration, and a sense of well-being. As a result, students grow and flourish in an atmosphere where teachers display the Fruit of the Spirit and Christ-like attitudes. "That all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul." (3 John 1:2) (Proverbs 4:20-22, Mark 6:31)*
	• Indicator 19.1: The school provides a Christ-centered working environment characterized by elements such as positive relationships, mutual encouragement, prayer support, and Christian community. • Indicator 19.2: The school provides new personnel with adequate onboarding and support. • Indicator 19.3: The number of school leaders, faculty, and staff is sufficient for the scope of the school. • Indicator 19.4: Policies and practices related to employee well-being set healthy and realistic expectations with a focus on work-life balance.

Standard 20: **Student Wellness**	**The school provides a distinctively Christian environment in which students are well cared for, feel supported and secure, and are encouraged to pursue godly and healthy living.**
Why is this important?	*Students who feel safe and cared for at school are more likely to flourish educationally, think creatively, and connect socially and emotionally with peers and adults. When students feel safe, they are able to embrace wisdom in their heart and find pleasure in knowledge (Proverbs 2:7-10). "He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices." (Psalm 16:8b-9a) (Job 16:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12; 1 Timothy 6:3-7)*
	• Indicator 20.1: From a biblical perspective, the school cultivates an emotionally healthy environment in which students experience support in their social/emotional development. • Indicator 20.2: The school provides instruction and programs that emphasize and encourage godly and healthy living habits. • Indicator 20.3: The school provides student activities that are consistent with the mission of the school, varied in focus, and reflective of the needs and interests of students.

…so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Philippians 1:10

Appendix A – Leadership Section

Due to the significant impact that leadership has on the overall success of a school, this section specifically addresses how the school leader(s) contribute to the accreditation process. Whether a standard or indicator specifically includes the word "leader" within the text, or leadership is implied as an undergirding concept, leadership is woven throughout the *Inspire* protocol.

School leaders should read through the standards that have responsibilities identified for leaders, and then the suggestions at the end of this appendix. Whether your leadership team is one person or many, you will find some ideas that apply.

Standard 1: The school operates from a written mission and statement of faith that outline its biblical foundations and beliefs. The school identifies and assesses its expected student outcomes and uses results to drive decisions throughout operations and programs.

The leader ensures that the foundational statements are written, current, based on biblical values and representative of the school's beliefs. He/she also makes sure that the Expected Student Outcomes are in alignment with the values of the governing body, meet their stated goals (or Ends), and are assessed in a variety of ways to determine if the school is truly accomplishing its mission. These stated outcomes drive decisions that the leader makes, and he/she models that to the next level of leadership. This is an example of how executive leadership drives a process, sets a tone, and ensures alignment between what the school says it believes and what it actually does.

Standard 2: The school facilitates spiritual formation of students, provides opportunities for discipleship and outreach, and fosters the development of a biblical worldview. Spiritual growth toward maturity in Christ is a priority throughout school programs, is regularly assessed, and is modeled by faculty and staff.

The leader will create priorities when it comes to biblical worldview development and spiritual formation. He/she will be a powerful voice during discussions concerning budgets, staffing, curriculum, and activities that primarily foster spiritual development. He/she also will be watched carefully regarding his/her personal involvement in the spiritual lives of students and staff.

Standard 3: The school has a Christ-centered governing body that functions within clearly defined roles and responsibilities, establishes governance policies, participates in strategic planning, and advances organizational effectiveness. The head of school works collaboratively with school leadership to implement policies and procedures, support effective instructional practices, and drive school improvement.

Watching the body of Christ work cooperatively and effectively is a great testimony to staff, students, and parents. It also promotes a spiritually healthy environment in which staff feel valued and good ideas can be recognized and cultivated. How the head of school works with mid-level leadership is an example of mentorship and investing in the lives of those who will lead the school in the future.

Standard 4: The school develops a Christlike culture in which staff and students demonstrate respect, sensitivity, and responsiveness to individual needs and differences.

The leader can have significant influence on the culture of the school. If the leader is respectful of every student, parent, and staff member, chances are great that the culture will exemplify Christlikeness.

Standard 5: The school engages stakeholders in ways that develop community, promote accountability, and improve institutional effectiveness.

A good leader listens. It is obvious that he/she cannot follow-up on every suggestion made, but he/she can take the time to create authentic ways to gather input. This promotes accountability and encourages improvement.

Standard 6: The school provides opportunities

to engage with local, national, and global communities in ways that make a positive impact on students and build relationships outside of school.

Connections with the local community or national organizations may naturally flow from relationships that the leader has with other community leaders. Even opportunities for service or missions abroad may come from connections the leader has created or maintained through his/her personal relationships.

Standard 7: The school provides an instructional program that promotes a biblical worldview; supports the school's expected student outcomes; and fosters high student engagement, critical thinking, and academic growth.

While the teaching and learning domain is typically the purview of the principals and teachers at the school, there are several indicators in which the head of school can be especially influential. Indicator 7.5 speaks about the need for Bible to be required as a core subject. Demonstrating a love of God's word will influence not only the teachers but the students and parents as well. Indicator 7.6 points to crucial areas such as using outside sources for dual credit classes, online courses, and instructional programs. Leadership in this area may further enhance or detract from the mission of the school.

Standard 9: The school conducts and analyzes varied and authentic assessments to monitor and evaluate student learning. The school then utilizes results to inform decision making.

While instructional leaders are primarily responsible for making sure testing results are used in the classroom, the entire leadership team is responsible for using the results for school-wide decisions such as staffing, curriculum purchases, and resource allocation.

Standard 10: The school plans and implements a coordinated program of professional development and evaluation that results in improved professional practice and increased student achievement.

Professional development and teacher evaluation is often credited with helping educators refine and improve their craft. Leaders greatly influence how these processes are implemented at the school. Does it guide their improvement efforts? A good leader and his/her growth mindset can have a significant impact on the attitudes of the entire staff.

Standard 12: The school maintains human resource policies and implements practices that ensure the employment, management, and evaluation of qualified and competent Christian personnel to enhance organizational effectiveness.

Well qualified teachers tend to know their subjects and know how to teach them in the most engaging ways possible. With the option of a School-Based Professional Development (SBPD) Plan, a school leader will have a great deal of influence on the ongoing professional development of the teachers. An SBPD Plan has certain requirements that must be approved by ACSI, but there are also quite a few areas in which the leader of the school has significant influence.

Standard 13: The school provides advising and support services that assist students in preparing for future success while considering the unique needs of each student.

This is another area where the leader should lead by example. He/she will have many opportunities to meet with students, parents, and faculty and treat each one as unique and made in the image of God. While the school may not be able to serve every student that knocks on their door, the leader can be a model of welcome, honesty, and a willingness to try, when it is within his/her capacity.

Standard 14: The school operates with integrity through sound financial practices that promote institutional effectiveness and financial stability.

The leader may not be the one who manages the finances, but he/she regularly reviews them. He/she sets the stage for how carefully finances are handled and creates expectations for accountability. Often, it is the head of school who

discusses the overview with the governing body and presents the financial picture to the parents.

Standard 15: The school engages in long-range planning to maintain viability, provide sufficient resources, and ensure appropriate staffing to fulfill the school's mission.

The head of school and the governing body, together, talk about long-range planning and how it will accomplish the school's mission. They typically discuss the finances, facilities, resources, and staffing needs of the school and create scenarios for how to meet those needs as they consider the current market conditions in their area.

Standard 18: The school operates from written policies and procedures that ensure the health and safety of staff, students, and campus visitors.

Health and safety are major concerns in schools today. The school leadership must make sure that their school's policies are up to date, backed up by proper training, and well implemented.

Standard 19: The school provides all personnel with a Christ-centered work environment, appropriate support, and encouragement to pursue a healthy lifestyle.

The leader sets the example by articulating and exemplifying what he/she expects and encouraging the staff to be emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy. Other aspects include making sure that an appropriate number of trained staff are available, new teachers are mentored, and policies are in place to protect and encourage staff to pursue a work-life balance.

Standard 20: The school provides a distinctively Christian environment in which students are well cared for, feel supported and secure, and are encouraged to pursue godly and healthy living.

Indications of students' well-being will show up in handbooks, extracurricular policies, and general procedures. For example, Indicator 20.3 states that: The school provides student activities that are consistent with the mission of the school, varied in focus, and reflective of the needs and interests of students. Leaders set the tone as to whether all areas of academics, sports, fine arts, and spiritual formation activities are well-balanced in a student's schedule.

Suggestions as to how leaders could use this information (not required):

1. Create an informal self-evaluation. Use the indicators listed above to form questions relevant for your school situation as a self-evaluation.

2. Create a survey to give to the leadership team to determine which members are (or should be) responsible for each item listed above. Principles of shared leadership suggest that these responsibilities can be delegated to others or shared among a group, as long as there is training, oversight, and touchpoints occasionally to ensure that everyone is working toward the same goals. When wording the questions, think in terms of how you want to use the results. Are you hoping to gain information on WHO should be doing these things? Do you want to gain a rating on HOW WELL they are doing them currently?

3. Create a survey to give to your staff about the leadership team. This takes courage but can yield great results. Indicator 5.3 states, Collaboration is valued and cultivated in the school culture. Faculty and staff members are invited to participate through perspectives, ideas, and solutions to improve institutional effectiveness while promoting a sense of community. Also note the first part of Indicator 19.1: The school provides a Christ-centered working environment characterized by elements such as positive relationships, mutual encouragement, prayer support, and Christian community. When staff is listened to, asked for suggestions, and then sees results, community is built. Great ideas can come from those who work on the front lines.

4. Review the job descriptions of leaders. Are all the aspects of leadership covered in the standards above listed in the job descriptions

of the leaders? If the same responsibility is listed for two or more leaders, is it clear how the leaders share that responsibility?

5. <u>Consider the training of various leaders</u>. Is there an area from the job description for any leader in which he/she could benefit from specific training? Could the entire leadership team use training together on some aspect that has been identified in the accreditation protocol?

6. <u>Identify an area of leadership that would rise to the level of an area of improvement.</u> After implementing some of these suggestions above, it may be that restructuring, training, or cultivating shared leadership rises to the top as an initiative that would bring great value to the school.

We know the leader doesn't do it all and doesn't do it alone. However, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." (Maxwell) One definition of leadership states that "Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal." (Kruse)

The accreditation protocol most often identifies "the school" as the responsible party for the essential functions. The leader influences what gets done and often, how it gets done. Leaders are crucial in setting direction, developing people, and making the organization work. (How Leadership…) This leadership section should help you as the leader, or the extended leadership team, see how your role impacts the overall health of the school and accomplishes its mission.

Appendix A Resources

How Leadership Influences Student Learning, Executive Summary, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota, 2004.

Kruse, Kevin. What is Leadership? Forbes, April 9, 2013. https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/?sh=37c032635b90

Maxwell, John C., The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader, Thomas Nelson, 2007.

Appendix B – Curriculum Documentation Requirements

Curriculum is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to a rigorous academic program. A quality school prioritizes the continuous development of its instructional program and the documentation that guides that program. At each grade level and in each course, the curriculum documentation includes far more than the contents of any textbook. As such, this documentation:

1. describes the school's instructional program,

2. articulates the biblical basis for each discipline,

3. helps to ensure continuity between grade levels and subject areas,

4. guides the teacher in planning instructional activities,

5. informs the purchase of textbooks and other resource materials, and

6. provides a basis for evaluation of the school's instructional program.

ACSI *Inspire* discontinues use of the terms "Curriculum Maps" and "Curriculum Guides" in favor of "curriculum documentation." Regardless of terms, curriculum documentation should reflect the sequence of steps that provides a plan for instruction, paced over time and with identified resources. Standard 8 of the ACSI *Inspire* protocol focuses on the curricular program of the school with the following indicators:

- Indicator 8.1: Comprehensive curriculum documentation is utilized to provide clear instructional guidance across grade levels and subject areas.

- Indicator 8.2: Curriculum documentation demonstrates the alignment of content standards, objectives, instructional activities, and assessments.

- Indicator 8.3: Curriculum documentation is

updated regularly through a collaborative review process.

The list below provides elements that must be included in the school's curriculum documentation (Indicator 8.1) and gives suggestions on how these required elements might be arranged. It is not meant to describe all possible "right answers." If your school has a system that works well for your teachers, is easy to keep up-to-date, and includes the elements below, then review it with the chairperson assigned to your school. That system may be perfectly fine. Though an electronic mapping system is not required for ACSI accreditation, it is recommended.

1. Well-documented biblical basis for each discipline – Typically this is an introduction to each subject area that includes a paragraph about the school's philosophy and biblical basis for how a particular subject/discipline will be approached. Often these statements are included on each course description or syllabus online so prospective parents can read them.

2. Biblical integration or worldview development concepts – The weaving of God's truth—in precept, principle, and practice—into teaching and learning in such a way that a unified, God-centered view of life is presented. Sometimes there is only one essential biblical question or concept per unit. Other times, these are broken down in greater detail by lesson. These may include a Bible verse or passage; however, a verse alone is not biblical integration.

3. Learning objectives – These outline skills or concepts a student should have attained when the instruction of a unit or lesson is completed.

4. School-selected standards – These provide alignment with instructional standards to ensure continuity for students entering or leaving the school, while maintaining connectivity to the instructional context in which the school functions. While most Christian schools are not mandated to follow

state or national frameworks, alignment to standards of the school's choosing is required for accreditation. These may come from state or national standards, or standards from groups like National Council of Teachers of Mathematics or Standards for American Education Reaching Out. If the school has written its own standards for any subject (such as Bible), they may reference those.

5. Resources – The schoolwide curriculum documentation should include the primary resources utilized to complete each unit. It does not need to contain every item that is used as a resource within a particular unit as those will be included in lesson plans as appropriate. (In electronic mapping, links to resources can be live. An additional advantage of electronic mapping tools is that textbooks, websites, other books, videos, recordings, etc. can be sorted and searched for use across grade levels.)

6. Time allotted for each unit – This can be entered as days or weeks.

7. Evaluation/Assessments – Evaluation/assessment strategies are the procedures used to measure the stated instructional objectives including observations, portfolios, projects, demonstrations, reports, and oral and written tests. It is best to avoid a boilerplate approach that replicates identical techniques across all grades. Assessments must be applicable, specific, and appropriate to the grade and content, and they should be described in more detail than just "Quiz," "Project," or "Essay." There should be some

indication of where those materials could be found. (Electronic mapping tools allow assessments and rubrics to be linked and readily available.)

8. A Scope and Sequence – This guides the overall curriculum plan to assess where gaps or overlaps exist. A scope and sequence charts both the comprehensive and developmental nature of how learning experiences are organized for a subject/discipline over time. This process ensures that learning is scaffolded as students work through courses from year to year. A scope and sequence can take the form of a document or can be shown through more dynamic tools in electronic mapping systems.

Curriculum documentation should align content standards, objectives, instructional activities, and assessments (Indicator 8.2). Content standards and objectives should inform instructional activities, and assessments should accurately measure the objectives.

The creation of schoolwide curriculum documentation is often a multi-year process. Review of curriculum documentation (separate from a textbook review cycle) should be ongoing (Indicator 8.3).

For schools just getting started and for those seeking to refine their curriculum review process, ACSI has developed a document that provides an expanded explanation to assist schools with various aspects of curriculum (Resource for Curriculum Review).

Appendix C – Assessments

Information from student assessments informs the school regarding a wide variety of student performance measures. The results of these measures should be used to guide instruction, make program modifications, or change conditions to support student learning. ACSI *Inspire* Standard 9 addresses assessment and use of data with the following indicators:

- **Indicator 9.1: The school systematically collects data from a range of assessments. The school provides feedback to students and communicates assessment results to stakeholders as appropriate.**

- **Indicator 9.2: The school collaboratively analyzes student assessment data including progress of individual students, schoolwide trends, and disaggregation of data in meaningful ways. Teachers are trained to understand applicable assessment data.**

- **Indicator 9.3: Teachers effectively utilize assessment data for improving classroom instruction to achieve student outcomes. Instructional leaders use assessment results to inform educational decisions and drive long-range planning.**

The following sections provide details for how schools should present the results of their assessments, and describe what was done with the information gathered, directly within the *Domain 3: Teaching and Learning* section of the self-study. **(This information is required.)**

Collection of Data (Indicator 9.1)
(2-3 paragraphs)
Summarize achievement data that best represents the overall picture of student performance for the last three years. Be sure to include all grades/ages which the school gives standardized assessments. (Include any state-level, national, norm-referenced, and/or criterion-referenced assessments such as Iowa Assessments, ACT, PSAT, SAT, CLT, DIBELS, AP Tests, etc.)[1]

Analysis of Data (Indicator 9.2)
(2-3 paragraphs)
Describe the school's analysis of student assessment data and summarize schoolwide trends that were discovered during the process of data analysis.

Utilization of Data (Indicator 9.3)
(2-3 paragraphs)
Explain how data from assessments have been utilized to adjust instruction, make program modifications, or change conditions that support student learning.

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1   See https://capenetwork.org/program/schools for a list of nationally normed achievement tests used for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. This document also includes average school scores in the top 15% of the nation in reading and mathematics for private schools. It may be helpful as a point of reference.

Appendix D – Stakeholder Feedback and Survey Administration

Introduction

The *Inspire* protocol requires schools to collect stakeholder feedback and analyze that data for the purpose of school improvement (see Standard 5). The information gathered may be in reference to how well the school does with the academic program, the spiritual formation of students, or more functional aspects such as regular communication. While the school can ask parents for their responses individually or in focus groups, it may be more efficient to use a survey. Surveys can be designed by the school to ask specific questions or can come from organizations with expertise in this area who can also help with the norming of the survey on a larger population. Nationally normed data is particularly helpful when it comes to knowing if the school program is rated as effective by a group of stakeholders in comparison to other schools.

ACSI recommends a separate Survey Administration subcommittee to manage the decisions regarding choosing, administering, analyzing, and distributing the results of the surveys. The "Self-Study Instructions" section below provides prompts for schools to address in their self-study for accreditation. The results and conclusions should be given to each of the subcommittees to use as input for their domain section work.

See Guidelines for Survey Administration, Analysis, and Application for information and recommended processes for use of surveys to inform the school's improvement goals.

Self-Study Instructions (no more than one page)

1. Briefly describe the school's process for gathering stakeholder feedback for school improvement. Include the specific stakeholder groups involved.

2. Summarize the overall conclusions drawn from the feedback received.

3. Describe how the school plans to utilize conclusions to leverage strengths and develop goals for school improvement.

Appendix E – Addendums

The following addendums are available for schools to use in conjunction with *Inspire*. Some of the addendums may be required based on criteria articulated within the addendum. Other addendums require a separate application process.

Early Education Addendum (required for standalone EE programs and any EE-12 school that desires to include the EE program in their accreditation)

Exemplary Addendum (requires a separate application and approval)

Hybrid Addendum (required if the school offers a hybrid program)

International Student Program Addendum (required starting in 2025-2026 if the school meets certain criteria)

Online Addendum (required if the school meets certain criteria)

Residential Program Addendum (required starting in 2025-2026 if the school meets certain criteria)

Appendix F – Additional Resources

There are two sections below that provide resources for schools completing the self-study process. The first section contains required resources for the school to review as part of the self-study process. The second section contains additional helpful (not required) resources for the school to review as part of the self-study process.

Required Resources

Purpose Domain

Guidelines and Requirements for Governance (Standard 3)

Teaching and Learning Domain

Guidelines and Expectations for Instruction from Outside Sources (Standard 7)

Guidelines for Outside Contracted Teachers or Instructors (Standards 7 and 12)

Expertise Domain

Standard 11 Checklist (Standard 11)

IRS Nondiscrimination Requirements (Standard 11)

Definitions and Screening for Volunteers in the Christian School (Standard 11)

Meeting Indicator 12.2 (school leadership and faculty qualifications) (Standard 12)

Certification Spreadsheet (Standard 12)

Request for Faculty Waiver (Standard 12; if applicable)

Resources Domain

Meeting Indicator 14.3 (requirements for financial review/audit) (Standard 14)

Helpful Resources

General

Evidence Guide

Guidelines for Substantive Change in Accredited Schools

Purpose Domain

Assessment of Expected Student Outcomes (Standard 1)

Spiritual Formation Assessment (Standard 1)

The Value of Expected Student Outcomes (Standard 1)

Relationships Domain

Conducting Demographic Assessments (Standard 5)

FSCI and Accreditation Surveys (Standard 5)

Guidelines for Survey Administration, Analysis, and Application (Standard 5)

Teaching and Learning Domain

Guidelines for Teaching Bible (Standard 7)

Resource for Curriculum Review (Standard 8)

Guidelines for Assessment Data Collection, Analysis, and Application (Standard 9)

School-Based Professional Development (Standard 10)

Expertise Domain

Student Records Retention (Standard 11)

Policy Manual Guidelines (Standards 11 and 12)

Nondiscrimination for Hiring (Standard 12)

Succession Planning and Leadership Development (Standard 12)

Well-Being Domain

Several helpful resources for Domain 6, as well as other helpful resources, from third party organizations can be found on the ACSI website.

Appendix G – *Inspire* and FSCM Alignment

ACSI developed the Flourishing School Culture Model (FSCM) to provide a framework to measure community strengths and areas for improvement and help schools create an action plan to see transformational results. The research identified 35 validated constructs that were organized into five primary domains. The Flourishing School Culture Instrument (FSCI), which undergirds the research, draws input from seven groups of individuals in the school community to give a well-rounded view of the school culture. The survey results from the FSCI yield rich data that can inform schools on how they are doing in many areas of accreditation. The charts below show the alignment of various *Inspire* indicators with the FSCM constructs. Following are ways schools can use FSCI results to inform their self-study:

1. FSCI results, including the Meaningful Strengths and the Key Growth Opportunities, can directly inform the school's survey response section in the self-study.

2. The school's FSCI scores on individual constructs can function as one piece of evidence to inform *Inspire* Indicator ratings, Domain strengths and areas for improvement, and Domain reflections.

3. The school can use their FSCI Key Growth Opportunities, along with Indicator ratings, reflections, and additional evidence, to inform their Prioritized Goals at the end of their self-study, which may directly inform the school's Accreditation Action Plan after the visit.

PURPOSE Domain						
Responsibility	Holistic Teaching	Integrated Worldview	God's Story	Questioning	Partnership	Spiritual Formation
1.1	13.3	2.1			5.1	2.2
1.2		7.1				2.1
3.1						

RELATIONSHIPS Domain								
Supportive Leadership	Leadership Interdependence	Family Relationships	Community Engagement	Mentoring Students	Insular Culture	Christlike Teachers	Prosocial Orientation	Caring Environment
3.5	3.3	4.1	6.1	2.2	6.1	4.1		4.1
5.3		5.1	6.3	4.2	6.2	12.1		4.2

TEACHING & LEARNING Domain										
Feedback	Collaboration	Systems Thinking	Data-Driven	Professional Development	Outcomes Focus	Culture of Improvement	Individualized Instruction	Best Practice	Engaged Learning	Behaviors for Learning
10.2	5.3	3.5	1.3	10.1	1.4	3.5	7.2	7.3	7.2	
10.3	8.3		5.2	10.3	9.3	9.3	7.3	7.4		
			9.3			15.1				

EXPERTISE & RESOURCES Domain				
Responsiveness to Special Needs	Qualified Staff	Resources	Resource Planning	Resource Constraints
4.1	12.2	16.1	14.1	
13.3		17.1	14.2	
			15.1	

WELL-BEING Domain		
Stress (teachers/leaders)	Healthy Living (students)	Resilience (students)
19.4	20.2	20.1

Appendix H – Glossary

Academic Counseling: Service to parents and students who are in need of advice or assistance with course selection, graduation requirements, college entrance examinations, college acceptance requirements, and general readiness for the next academic level. *(back to page 19)*

Accountability: Any number of ways the school ensures continued fulfillment of its own mission and other stated objectives. Through open communication and transparency, regular feedback from stakeholders can help the school identify ways to improve in meeting their own mission, policies, goals, and/or objectives.

Accreditation: The status granted to a school after standards have been met, a self-study has been written, a team has completed a peer-review process, and the commission has approved the school for accreditation. Accreditation is granted for six years or a period commensurate with that of another agency in a joint accreditation.

Accreditation Action Items: Specific areas for improvement, based on ACSI accreditation indicators, articulated near the end of the visiting team report. Accreditation Action Items are determined based on the school's prioritized goals for improvement in conjunction with the visiting team's findings. Accreditation Action Items are included on the school's Accreditation Action Plan, with progress reported in conjunction with the annual report. *(back to page 8)*

Accreditation Action Plan (AAP): A school's annualized plan for improvement created as a result of the areas for improvement identified through the accreditation self-study and visit process. Creation of the AAP is a multi-step process: the school establishes goals as part of the self-study, the school and the visiting team collaborate on those goals and the team's findings, and the school formalizes the written plan after the conclusion of the visit. The completed plan includes instructional, operational, and/or programmatic goals; strategies and timelines for reaching these goals; and assessment, personnel, resources, analysis, and reporting procedures to determine whether the goals have been achieved.

Administration: See School Leadership

Advisory Board: In church-sponsored schools that are governed by a church board, or in proprietary schools that may be led by an individual or team of founders/owners, an advisory board would function as an expert team of outside voices that lend experience and qualified input into various governance-related issues at the school. Though perhaps non-voting members of the governance structure, this group would serve to provide expert counsel for major decisions and, in some cases, as a liaison between school leadership and the church governing body or founder/owner of the institution.

Alumni: The entire group of former students of the school.

Annual Report: A report submitted by the school to the appropriate Divisional or Global office wherein the school provides an update on demographics, gives notice of any substantive changes, and affirms ongoing progress on the Accreditation Action Plan. *(back to page 8)*

Assessment (elementary/secondary): Methods of evaluating student performance and achievement – the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Schools should implement both assessment of learning, as well as assessment for learning (formative, summative, objective, subjective, formal, informal, etc.).

- Authentic Assessment: A form of assessment that requires students to complete projects or

perform skills which are tied to real-world tasks. Typically, students are graded with rubrics for the evaluation of these tasks rather than pencil and paper assessments.

- **Range of Assessments (also Varied Assessments):** Used to indicate that schools should implement several different forms and methods of assessment. Assessments utilized to meet the requirements could include standardized (multiple types), authentic, teacher-created, objective, subjective, formal, informal, summative, formative, and/or measures that utilize a combination of any of the above, as well as differentiated assessments based on learners' needs and interests.

Biblical Integration (or Biblical Worldview Integration): The weaving of God's truth—in precept, principle, and practice—into teaching and learning in such a way that a unified, God-centered view of life is presented in order to promote authentic application into the lives of students.

Biblical Worldview: Recognizing the authority of Scripture as the source of truth and using it as the lens through which we attempt to understand and respond to our world.

Board: See Governing Body

Candidate Status: The status of a school when it does not meet all of the criteria for accreditation, but is deemed able to complete the accreditation process in a three-year maximum time frame. Candidate status requires an application, candidacy visit, and approval. Candidate status is effective up to three full school years.

Certification: The credential used to verify a teacher or administrator has completed, or is on a plan to complete, specific academic requirements to serve in their role. Teachers and administrators can use an ACSI certificate or a state, national, or provincial certificate to fulfill the requirements for ACSI accreditation.

- **ACSI Certification:** The credential granted to teachers and administrators who hold at least a bachelor's degree from an institution that meets the accreditation or recognition requirement and who meet, or who are on a plan to meet, specific educational, biblical, and Christian Philosophy of Education requirements for an ACSI teacher/administrator credential.

- **State, National, or Provincial Certification:** A credential granted by the approved state, national, or provincial agency in order to serve as a teacher or administrator within their defined area. Certificates that qualify to fulfill ACSI accreditation requirements would be full state certificates requiring ongoing professional development. State-issued emergency, temporary, substitute, non-tax, non-public, or other types of certificates that would lack full standing in a public school would not apply. If the only thing missing to bring the certificate into full standing is teaching experience, which some states require, it may qualify upon review.

Code of Ethics: An identified set of guidelines that each individual commits to upholding in his/her role. This may be a formal document, or a less formal list of expectations.

Collaborative Goals Meeting: A time during the visit for the visiting team chairperson and selected team members to meet with the head of school and other members of school leadership to collaborate on the prioritized goals from the school's self-study in conjunction with the general findings of the accreditation team. The discussion centers around the school's prioritized goals (and how the school arrived at those goals) and any additional items that the team believes may belong on the school's Accreditation Action Plan. This discussion will require the visiting team to consider the school's mission and other unique aspects of the school in order to collaborate with school leadership around items that may make the most impact for the school's improvement process over the duration of the accreditation term. The collaborative goals meeting will help the team finalize the Accreditation

Action Items recorded in the visiting team report. The school will then use those Accreditation Action Items to create their Accreditation Action Plan for ongoing improvement.

Continuous Improvement: A consistent effort to improve the school's processes, procedures, and practices that focus on teaching, learning, and student achievement. Ongoing efforts may also be warranted in other areas that contribute to the overall student experience.

Commission on Accreditation: The commission established by the ACSI Board of Directors to establish policy, create structure, and provide oversight for all accreditation activities of the Association. The commission also hears and adjudicates appeals from the divisional commissions and serves as the primary commission for specialty protocols and international schools. *(back to page 8)*

Curriculum: The planned instructional program to be delivered to the students. Though a school's choice in textbooks and resources for any given grade level and subject area is an important consideration, the school's curriculum is much broader than a textbook series.

Curriculum Documentation: A written description of what is taught throughout the school that 1) describes the school's instructional program, 2) helps ensure continuity between grade levels and subject areas, and 3) provides a basis for evaluation of the school's instructional program.

Curriculum Guides/Maps: See Curriculum Documentation

Discipleship: To train another, through instruction and modeling, to follow Christ and practice spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, and faithful living.

Digital Citizenship: Using technology in safe, effective, discerning, and responsible ways that affect student learning and the community at large.

Divisional Accreditation Commission: The commission made up of representatives from ACSI-accredited schools in each division, or subset of the division. The commission meets, usually twice a year, to review and monitor accreditation activity in the division and to make decisions on school accreditation.

Early Education (EE): The care and the education of children before kindergarten. Kindergarten may be included if the program is a standalone early education program.

Equitable Compensation: Impartially determined salary ranges based on objective criteria such as years of service, credentials, experience, and/or performance. Compensation criteria should be available to employees for review. *(back to page 20)*

Expected Student Outcomes: What the school intentionally targets for all students to know, believe, understand, and/or be able to do in academic and non-academic areas after their tenure in the school. Outcomes are based on the mission and philosophy of the school.

Executive Leadership: See School Leadership

Facilities: All buildings and grounds on school property or utilized by the school.

Faculty: Generally referring to the instructional staff of the school, especially in instances where it is pertinent to make a distinction between instructional staff and non-instructional staff.

Fidelity: The manner in which assessments are conducted in accordance with their original intent and with the same degree of accuracy every time.

Governing Body: A group of elected or appointed individuals who come together to act as one for the purpose of establishing policies that will enable the school to achieve its established desirable ends

and to avoid results it considers unacceptable. These individuals are "trustees" who have authority when sitting as members of the governing body. (See Guidelines and Requirements for Governance)

Global: Within this protocol, 'global' specifically refers to contact with, and perspectives from, those outside of one's own country.

Head of School: The chief administrator/officer of the school. Titles for this role vary significantly from school to school (e.g., principal, administrator, headmaster, head of school, director, president, superintendent).

Independent CPA: A qualified CPA who has no vested interest in the school or a parent/related organization to the school.

Indicators: Descriptions of essential practices, processes, and procedures that elaborate and explain how schools can effectively meet the standards of accreditation.

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

Instructional Objectives: Statements that describe the skills or concepts the student will have attained when instruction in a particular subject, grade, unit, or lesson is completed.

Instructional Resources: The physical and digital resources that are available to support the instructional program. This includes the school's library, in any format a school chooses to utilize a library or otherwise provide those resources to students. Instructional resources could also include supplemental materials that are used in the instructional program and are identified in the curriculum documentation.

Leadership: See School Leadership

Mentoring: To intentionally train another through relationship, instruction, and modeling.

Mid-term Report: A report provided by the school to the appropriate Divisional or Global office at or near the midpoint of a school's accreditation term, wherein the school provides more detailed updates on the AAP, faculty qualifications, and other applicable accreditation expectations as specified by the Divisional or Global office or the Divisional Accreditation Commission. **The Divisional or Global office will notify the school if a mid-term report and/or visit is required.**

Mission: A brief statement of why the school exists and what the school seeks to accomplish.

Outreach: The action or activity of seeking to serve or otherwise connect with individuals or organizations outside of your own school in order to provide opportunities for students to develop Christian character.

Philosophy of Education: The school's beliefs about how children learn and how they should be instructed and assessed. This belief guides the instructional methods and classroom practices deemed appropriate considering the program's view of the nature and needs of children. A Christian school's philosophy of education would also include the place of faith in Christian education as well as how to integrate biblical truth into the overall curriculum planning and daily instruction.

Prioritized Goals for Improvement: The primary 3-5 goals for improvement determined by the school's steering committee as a result of the self-study process. The steering committee will use the analyses of the various subcommittees to create the prioritized goals for improvement, which are

based on the ACSI *Inspire* indicators and specific to the school's needs.

Referral: A procedure by which a teacher, counselor, or other school personnel suggests school or community resources to assist a student who has learning, emotional, physical, or other needs.

School Leadership: The on-site, day-to-day leader(s) of the school, often referring to the administrative or leadership team that may include directors, principals, assistant principals, curriculum directors, deans, non-instructional leaders, etc. Leadership may include department heads or lead teachers.

Scope and Sequence: Included as part of the curriculum documentation, a scope and sequence indicates the breadth of the content and the order in which it will be taught within and across grades.

Self-Study: The document produced by the steering committee and the various subcommittees of the school as they respond to the standards, indicators, and other prompts of the accreditation protocol. This document is a collaborative effort of school groups and must represent the combined input, analysis, and consensus of all those involved, with sufficient evidence to demonstrate the school's effectiveness with regard to standards and indicators.

Spiritual Formation: The teaching and nurturing of students in the process of spiritual growth toward maturity in Christ. This includes the development of a biblical worldview and Christian character.

Staff: All personnel employed by the school unless otherwise designated (e.g., "instructional staff," "non-instructional staff," etc.).

Stakeholder(s): A person or group with direct interest, involvement, or investment in the realization of the mission of the school (e.g., staff, students, parents, governing body, community, and donors).

Standards: The 20 established qualitative criteria for school accreditation.

Steering Committee: A group of individuals at the school that is responsible for the development and completion of the self-study. The steering committee works with each of the subcommittees to train, advise, and hold them accountable for completing tasks.

Subcommittee: A group of stakeholders at the school that is responsible for a section of the self-study. Subcommittees report to the steering committee.

Team Visit: A visit to the school by peer educators wherein they validate the accuracy and thoroughness of the self-study. The team engages in classroom visits and interviews, collaborates with the school around future goals, and constructs a team report. This visit is generally three to four days long.

Universal Rubric: The chart that defines or describes four levels of effectiveness as applied to all indicators in the *Inspire* protocol. Schools and visiting teams should use the universal rubric with the overall standard in mind as they review each indicator and provide evidence.

Visiting Team Report: A report written by the visiting team, in accordance with ACSI accreditation standards and policies, wherein the visiting team articulates their findings in the form of indicator ratings, commendations, recommendations, accreditation action items, and overall analyses.

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