ASSOCIATION OF



SCHOOLS



ACCS ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK THIRD EDITION • EFFECTIVE OCT. 1, 2024

INITIAL APPROVAL AND REVISIONS

Initial Approval
Ad-Hoc Committees for Review and Action on Draft Report Nov. 1, 2019/ACCS Presiden
Accreditation Overview
Accreditation Procedures
Accreditation Timeline
Standard B.3. Outside Influence (Was Legal Independence) January 2020/ACCS Board P. 12
Policy 5.10 Outside Influence Policy (Was Voucher Policy) January 2020/ACCS Board P. 8
Expanding ACCS Accreditation
Table: Standard Accreditation
Table: Accreditation Endorsements
Appendix A: Type of Accreditation and Accreditation Endorsements
Grievance Policy
Previsit Requirement
Previsit Rationale
Updated Standards for Virginia Schools
Multisite Endorsements
Multimodel Endorsements
Rewording of standards for music and art
Definition of Indicator
Addition to Standard B.2 Financial Independence
Revision to Standard F5 (was E.1) Pedagogy
Reorganization of Standard C. Governance and Administration (January 2024) P. 10
Addition of Iowa Guidelines/Revision to Tennessee Guidelines (April 2024) PP. 76 & 77
Update Texas Addendum

A SCHOOL YOU'D WANT FOR YOUR CHILD

Welcome to the journey of accreditation with the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS). As you embark on this path, whether exploring, renewing, or achieving accreditation for the first time, you join a community dedicated to excellence and faithfulness in classical Christian education.

Embarking on the accreditation process with the ACCS marks a significant step in the life of any school. It symbolizes a commitment to not only meet established standards of excellence but also embrace the rich heritage of classical Christian education. We are privileged to serve and support you.

ACCS accreditation standards include those essential to ensure a quality classical Christian education. Specific standards are necessary for accreditation to have meaning and to ensure that a school is the one parents want for their children.

ACCS accreditation provides the best fit for classical Christian schools incorporating Scriptural truth into every aspect of the school. Like standardized testing, the type of accreditation a school uses will influence the school. What sets ACCS apart from other accrediting bodies is our focus on classical Christian education, providing a tailored fit for schools dedicated to recovering this older form of education. It's challenging to go against the grain; choosing ACCS means joining forces with those who share your vision, making the journey less daunting.

Like other K-12 accrediting bodies, our process involves a pre-visit, self-study, and site visit to ensure compliance with accreditation standards and faithfulness to your school's policies. Because ACCS accreditation is a catalyst for school improvement, during the two-day site visits, the team works to see each classroom instructor—this focus on classroom instruction sets ACCS accreditation apart. Many schools have reported how valuable they have found the process of documenting and demonstrating their compliance with the accreditation standards and that they are stronger and more aligned with their mission for having undergone this process.

ACCS accreditation also provides schools with recognition. When a school achieves ACCS accreditation, it simultaneously receives accreditation from the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), and is listed in its online directory. Schools will also have the option of co-accreditation with the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CESS).

Experienced administrators know that "When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise." (II Corinthians 10:12). Embarking on this 12 to 18—month journey is humbling, challenging, and rewarding, inviting introspection and external evaluation in pursuit of excellence. It's an opportunity for growth, collaboration, and gaining wisdom and fresh perspectives from fellow educators dedicated to helping you personally and your school.

Through our process and participants, ACCS will help identify areas that need strengthening and provide direction to help you improve your school. The result will be a school you want to enroll your child in.

Thank you for considering ACCS accreditation. We're here to support you every step of the way.

CONTENTS

Application for School Accrediation and Renewal	V
Prologue	I
A. Internal Definitions	I
B. Explanation	2
Section 1: ACCS School Accreditation Program	3
Goals and Means of the ACCS School Accreditation Program	3
Mission Statement	3
About ACCS Accreditation	3
Expanding ACCS Accreditation	4
Standard Accreditation	5
Accreditation Endorsements	6
Accreditation Overview	8
Candidacy Status: Process and Qualifications	10
Section 2: Standards	II
A. Mission, Vision, and Planning	II
B. Accountability, Independence, and Stability.	12
C. Governance and Administration	16
D. Cultivation of Student Virtue and the School Community	20
E. Academics	24
F. Faculty and Instructional Resources	31
G. Student Work Samples	: 37
H. Standards for Renewal Accreditation	38
I. Collaborative	38
J. State Guidelines	39
K. Requests for Substitutions or Adjustments	
Section 3: Accreditation Procedures	40
A. Previsit Rationale	40
B. Self-Study Documentation	40

C. Accreditation Committee and Site Visit
D. General Philosophy
E. Accreditation Fees and Expenses
F. Denial and Termination
G. Appeals Process
H. Accreditation Renewal
I. Accreditation Categories and Determination
J. Probationary Status (Renewal Accreditation Only)
K. Annual Renewal for ACCS-Accredited Schools
L. Substantive Change in ACCS-Accredited Schools
Definitions for Draft Accreditation Report
Table: Schools Seeking Initial Accreditation
Table: Schools Seeking Renewal Accreditation: Full
Table: Schools Seeking Renewal Accreditation: Probation
L. Review and Change Procedures
M. ACCS Grievance Policy
Appendix A: Types of ACCS Accreditation and Accreditation Endorsements
Appendix B: Financial Integrity Requirements
Appendix C: Accreditation Time Line
Appendix D: Additional Standards for Regional Accrediting Organizations
1. Georgia School Accreditation Addendum (GAPSAC)
2. Tennessee School Accreditation Addendum
3. Texas State School Accreditation Addendum (TEPSAC)
4. Virginia State School Accreditation Addendum (VCPE)
Appendix E: ACCS Board Policies Related to ACCS Accreditation
Rationale for Accrediting
Outside Influence Policy
Appendix F: Sample Submission Package
Appendix G: Instructional Methods: Self-Evaluation Tool
Appendix H: ACCS Teacher Certification

APPLICATION FOR SCHOOL ACCREDITATION & RENEWAL



SCHOOL NAME				
OFFICIAL LEGAL NAME				
STREET ADDRESS/MAILING AD	DRESS			
CITY		STATE	ZIP	
EMAIL		WEBSITE		
YEAR FOUNDED	ENROLLMENT _		GRADES TAUGHT	
ACCS MEMBERSHIP SINCE (MO	NTH/YEAR)			
CONTACT PERSON			_TITLE	
PHONE	EMAIL			

For the school to be approved as a Candidate for Accreditation or for Accreditation Renewal by the director of accreditation, this application must be accompanied by the following documentation:

- 1. Formal approval by the school board
 - · on the school's decision to pursue ACCS Accreditation;
 - that the school will have teachers become ACCS certified upon receiving accreditation;
 - · showing the school supports the work and mission of ACCS.

(Include a copy of the minutes that contains the board's motion and vote.)

- 2. A letter signed by the school board chair, stating that
 - the school is not in violation of state law;
 - each board member attends or is a member of a Christian church;
 - each board member has read and affirms the ACCS Statement of Faith as their personal belief.
 (Exceptions may be considered upon an explanatory letter from the board member(s) in question,
 provided to the director of accreditation.)

(Also include a list of board members and the name of the church they attend.)

- 3. Evidence that the school conforms to the membership requirements of the ACCS. Specifically, include documentation that shows that
 - the school does not explicitly endorse unbiblical family relationships or implicitly affirm unbiblical family relationships in employment policies;

- the school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin with regard to *enrollment*, as well as, for *hiring*;
- the school is committed to providing, or finding a path to, full K–12 classical Christian education for their students, now or in the future. This may include a partnership with other schools. (Note: Schools seeking a limited-grade level endorsement need not have plans to grow to grades K–12.)
- in the grades served, the school conforms to the trivium, as well as provides, at a minimum, four years of instruction in Latin or ancient Greek for each student, and one year of formal logic and one year of rhetoric in the secondary. (Note: Schools applying for the K–8 limited grade level endorsement do not need to offer rhetoric.)
- 4. Documentation (e.g., marketing materials or web pages) showing that
 - the public description of the school as a classical Christian school;
 - the school's mission statement;
 - the grades currently offered by the school (K–12 accreditation may be started with grades K–10 in place, though a graduating class is required before accreditation is awarded);
 - has been in operation for at least four full academic years with enrolled students. (Five years of operation will be required before accreditation is awarded).
- 5. List of faculty, both full- and part-time, courses they teach, and degrees held by each. Include the school's hiring policy (or written requirements) that defines the qualifications for teachers.
- 6. **Initial Accreditation ONLY.** Describe the steps taken to ascertain that the school is likely to achieve ACCS Accreditation (consultant(s) engaged, school visits, etc.).
- 7. Renewals ONLY. A letter explaining the correction of each discrepancy and any action taken on each recommendation from the last accreditation report. Provide documentation for the discrepancy corrections.
- 8. A check for \$2,000 towards processing fees. The remaining \$2,000 will be due following receipt of the accreditation draft report. (The school will also be responsible for travel, lodging, and meal expenses incurred by the Accreditation Committee who undertakes the site visit.)

The signature below affirms the school's commitment to pay all substantiated expenses directly related to the accreditation visit, upon billing from ACCS.

CIONATURE OF HEAD OF COHOO!	DATE

SIGNATURE OF HEAD OF SCHOOL

DATE

If you are unable to meet any of the items listed above, please call the ACCS office at (208) 882-6101 to discuss the item more fully.

PROLOGUE

A. INTERNAL DEFINITIONS

- Grammar grades: K–6
- Dialectic or logic phase: 7–8
- Rhetoric phase: 9–12
- "Secondary" refers to 7–12.
- "Authorized" as used with "diploma" refers to the ability of the accredited school to issue diplomas that are authorized by the ACCS. This authorization is similar to that of other program-type specific diplomas, for example, the International Baccalaureate diploma. ACCS schools accredited with certain endorsements (K–8 for example) may not issue authorized diplomas.
- "Director of Accreditation," alternately referred to as the Accreditation Director, refers to an executive position within the ACCS empowered to manage the accreditation process on behalf of the ACCS President, and ultimately, the board of directors.
- "Endorsement" means a specified modification to the standard ACCS accreditation status.
- "Graduation Requirement" means that every graduate of the school must meet the requirement for the ACCS Authorized Diploma(s) offered by the school. The school may offer "certificates" that do not meet these requirements. "Certificate" means a "Certificate of Completion."
- "Instruction" means teaching done within a class or curriculum, as a component or as the primary topic of a course. "Instruction in" need not reference a course.
- "Primary and secondary" when describing schools or education, refers to K–12 education, as opposed to college or pre-school.
- "Required" as it relates to student requirements means that the student in the school continuously (not a transfer), under normal circumstances, is required to take the course.
- "Year" is the equivalent of a Carnegie unit or 120 hours of instruction.

B. EXPLANATION

2

Each standard has sub-standards labeled with numerical extensions (A, A1, A2, etc.)

- "Principles" provide the basic logic behind the standard.
- "Indicators" illustrate the means ACCS-accredited schools typically use to demonstrate compliance with the standard. These particular ways are not required (nor are they standards). Still, if schools use other methods to comply with the standard, they must include an explanation in the self-study demonstrating how they adhere to the standard.
- "Documentation" identifies the source document required to demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Because we value the more humane, as opposed to analytical, approach to accreditation, we depend on highly qualified teams to exercise their judgment across the spectrum of classical Christian education.

SECTION 1 ACCS SCHOOL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

GOALS AND MEANS OF THE ACCS SCHOOL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

The goal of the ACCS school accreditation program is to provide objective and recognized standards of quality for those schools desiring to serve Christ through an explicitly classical and Protestant Christian approach to primary and secondary education.

To this end, ACCS has established criteria for accreditation that ensure that its accredited schools achieve the following:

- A well-conceived program committed to a classical approach to education in light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures
- Sufficient, qualified administrative, teacher, and support staff to achieve its goals
- Sufficient instructional and other facility resources to achieve its goals

MISSION STATEMENT

For schools desiring to serve Christ through an explicitly classical Christian approach to primary and secondary education, ACCS accreditation is a school-improvement program that provides an evaluation of a school and its practices based on objective and humane standards to encourage stability, quality, and a measure of excellence.

ABOUT ACCS ACCREDITATION

ACCS accreditation is an independent, private, Christian form of accountability for schools that define themselves as "classical Christian." Like conventional K–12 accreditation, ACCS accreditation assesses the quality of processes and practices within a school. Unlike conventional accreditation, the ACCS verifies the conformance to the standards of classical Christian pedagogy as described in the ACCS Membership Handbook.

ACCS has established and implemented accreditation standards which are consistent with the classical Christian educational philosophy and practices promoted by the Association (see the ACCS Membership Handbook). These standards are based on historical and reliable indicators of educational excellence. The accreditation process help schools improve and evaluate a minimum acceptable standard of accomplishment.

ACCS makes its accreditation standards and procedures available to interested parties. ACCS will address any misrepresentation of accredited status by any school whether a member of the Association or not.

This verification of our particular type of education means that outside observers depend on ACCS accreditation to ensure that a particular school performs substantially according to the specialized standards of a classical Christian school. For this reason, schools may find ACCS accreditation more difficult to earn than other forms of accreditation.

The ACCS is selective with whom it will seek agreements. In most cases, we do not directly associate with federal or state governments. We do not seek reciprocity with regional accreditors. And, we will not engage in any agreement that will encumber the educational practices of our schools. We do engage private accreditation recognition when this is beneficial and does not compromise our independence. We do not oppose or encourage "dual accreditation" when a school believes that two accreditations would be helpful. However, we do not change our standards or process (e.g., ACCS must select the visit committee members), in dual accreditation situations.

EXPANDING ACCS ACCREDITATION

For many years, the ACCS accreditation program has successfully served K–12 schools with standard calendars and schedules. ACCS now seeks to expand the types of schools eligible for ACCS accreditation while maintaining the standards of excellence that schools and parents have come to expect. The accreditation process leads to school improvement.

STANDARD ACCREDITATION				
Grade Configuration	K-12	7–12 OR 9–12		
	(At least K–10 in place)			
Status	Available	Developmental		
Schedule and Calendar	Traditional calendar & schedule	Traditional calendar & schedule		
Next Step	Submit application for school	Send letter explaining:		
	accreditation (see p. iii).	 How students receive a classical, Christian education in grades K–6. Schools with grades 9 to 12 should also explain how students are taught logic and Latin (or Greek). How K-6 education is being provided in the community. How students' knowledge is assessed during the admissions process. 		
Website Listing	ACCS-accredited OR	ACCS-accredited OR		
	ACCS-accredited with distinction	ACCS-accredited with distinction		
Diplomas	Schools may issue diplomas. May use	Schools may issue diplomas. May use		
	this language: "Diploma authorized by	this language: "Diploma authorized		
	the Association of Classical & Christian	by the Association of Classical &		
	Schools."	Christian Schools."		
Miscellaneous	Multisite schools must meet additional standards (developmental).			

Developmental: Visit committees will use a draft set of revised standards during their site visit. Recommendations for changes to the draft standards, from the school and visit committee, will be provided to an ad-hoc committee following the site visit. Initial accreditation for these endorsements may involve one or two visits, depending on the school's readiness.

ACCREDITATION ENDORSEMENTS

Our endorsement program allows for a variety of types of accreditation available through the ACCS.

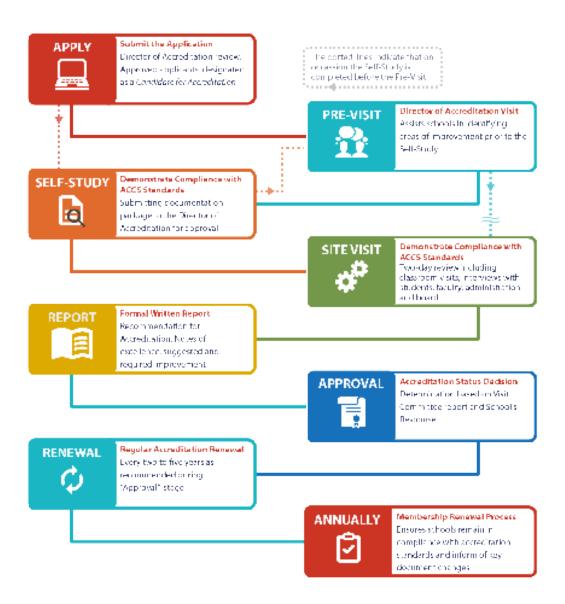
Grade Configuration	Collaborative Endorsement Varies K–12 for diploma authorization	Limited Grade Level Endorsement K–6 or K–8	Limited Student Service Endorsement Varies	Online School Endorsement
Grade Configuration	Varies K–12 for diploma			Endorsement
Configuration	K–12 for diploma	K–6 or K–8	Varies	
	*			1
1				
1	(At least K–10 in place)			
Status	Available	Developmental	Developmental	Requires ACCS Board approval
Calendar	Weekly schedule includes school days and home days. (Traditional calendar)	Traditional calendar and schedule	Traditional calendar and schedule	Traditional calendar and schedule
	Submit application for school accreditation (see p. iii).	Send a letter explaining how students receive a classical, Christian education in other schools in the local area.	Send a letter describing the students served at the school and an explanation of modifications to traditional schooling made to accommodate such students.	Send a letter describing the scope of online instruction, grades and subjects; approximate size of enrollment; and the location of the main office.
Listing	ACCS-accredited with collaborative endorsement	ACCS-accredited with a limited level endorsement	ACCS-accredited with a limited student service endorsement	

Diploma	Schools may issue	Schools may not	Diplomas issued	Diplomas may be
	diplomas. May	offer diplomas	depend upon grade	awarded IF the
	use this language:	or certificates,	configuration.	school ensures
	"Diploma authorized	ACCS endorsed or		that graduation
	by the Association of	otherwise.		requirements
	Classical & Christian			are met from the
	Schools."			state students
				reside in. This is
				currently required
				for students from
				Georgia, Tennessee,
				Texas, and Virginia.
Miscellaneous	Collaborative schools	Schools that grow	This category does not	
	must meet additional	to a K–12 structure	apply to schools with	
	standards.	MUST reapply for	selective application	
		K–12 accreditation.	policies that are	
			within the spectrum of	
			"normal."	

Developmental: Visit committees will use a draft set of revised standards during their site visit. Recommendations for changes to the draft standards, from the school and visit committee, will be provided to an ad-hoc committee following the site visit. Initial accreditation for these endorsements may involve one or two visits, depending on the school's readiness.

ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW

A. Timeline. Generally, schools take between one and two years to complete the accreditation process. (A timeline is included in this handbook.)



B. Application. The director of accreditation will review the application and accompanying documentation for completeness. Upon completion of a successful review, the school will be designated as a Candidate for Accreditation, which is a pre-accredited designation assigned to those schools which meet the initial Conditions of Eligibility and have been accepted for ongoing review toward ACCS school accreditation. Candidates still need to complete a pre-visit, a self-study, a site visit, and be approved by the ad-hoc committee for

the school to receive accredited status. Candidate schools are encourged to have administrators visit other ACCS-accredited schools during the school year.

- C. Previsit. All schools seeking ACCS initial accreditation must have an on-site previsit with the director of accreditation or a person selected by the director of accreditation. This is to ensure a person who has direct experience with the ACCS-accreditation process and standards. The sooner this is done after candidacy status is approved, the more time the school will have to address issues prior to the site visit. The visit may be scheduled anytime once the school is recognized as a candidate.
- D. Self-Study. Each candidate school is required to perform a self-study prior to the on-site visit. This study will include input from all members of the school administration and staff. During the self-study, schools will study all standards and requirements, conduct self-evaluations, train personnel, and make necessary changes and adjustments seeking to meet all of the ACCS Conditions of Eligibility and Criteria for Accreditation. This is the second part of a process where schools demonstrate compliance with ACCS accreditation requirements.
- E. Site Visit. Although much may be gleaned about a school from the self-evaluation documentation package, an on-site visit is required to affirm all aspects of the school's operation, including, but not limited to, class-room pedagogy, student participation and development, staff relations, parent-teacher relations, financial policies and procedures, board oversight, and community support. ACCS will appoint an accreditation committee to make the visit.
- F. Report. The site visit results in a formal, written report to the director of accreditation. Accreditation reports have three types of determinations that are always in reference to a specific standard.
 - I. Commendation: The school's practice exceeds the standard in such a way that it deserves commendation.
 - 2. Recommendation: The school's practice could be improved by taking the recommended action, but the school meets the minimum requirements for that standard.
 - 3. Discrepancy: The school falls short of one of the standards in its practices. Discrepancies may be major or minor in nature, as designated on the report.
- D. Accredited Status Determination. The director of accreditation will forward the recommendation (as to whether the school has met all ACCS accreditation requirements), to the president (or designee) and the visit committee chair (or senior member). Recommendations range from accredited status to provisional or probationary accreditation to preferred continued candidacy status. An ad-hoc committee consisting of the visit committee chairman, the director of accreditation, and the president's designee is authorized to make a final determination as to whether or not a school receives accreditation. Should the decision be appealed by the school in question, the appeal will go to the ACCS Board of Directors.

Once the ad-hoc committee has taken action to accept the proposed accredited status, the school is accredited (or if the school fails an initial accreditation, the school may remain a candidate for accreditation).

Schools with no remaining discrepancies will be classified as "Accredited."

- 2. Schools undergoing accreditation for the first time may be granted "Provisional Accreditation" as long as discrepancies remain.
- Schools undergoing accreditation for the first time may fail based upon the number and nature of discrepancies in the visiting team's report.
- 4. Schools that are undergoing a renewal may be granted "Probationary Accreditation" if discrepancies remain.
- 5. Schools that are undergoing a renewal may fail based on the number and nature of discrepancies.
- F. Re-evaluation. All schools accredited by ACCS must undergo regular accreditation renewals in order to retain their accredited status. Schools that were successfully accredited but fall short of the requirements on subsequent renewal visits may be initially placed in a Probationary Status for a fixed amount of time to allow them to correct discrepancies.
- G. Annual Updates. ACCS requires annual feedback from each accredited school (as part of the membership renewal process) to ensure schools remain in compliance with the ACCS accreditation standards. Notifications of certain changes on this annual form may provoke an accreditation review. As part of this review, schools may be required to submit additional documentation.

CANDIDACY STATUS: PROCESS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- A. To be recognized as a candidate for accreditation, the applicant-school must submit a complete application for accreditation (or accreditation renewal) with all specified documentation.
 - Note on board member requirements: The school must be governed by a board of at least three members (a husband and a wife serving on the board counting as one member), who are members of a Christian church and whose church and personal beliefs align with the ACCS Statement of Faith. (Each board member must affirm their personal agreement with the ACCS Statement of Faith. If individual board members cannot affirm the statement of faith as their personal belief, or if they do not attend or are not members of a Christian church, they must provide a written statement explaining the reasons for their position. These statements will be reviewed by the director of accreditation.)
- B. The director of accreditation will review the application and accompanying documentation for completeness. This may involve clarifications or requests for additional information.
- C. Upon completion of a successful review of the application by the director of accreditation, the school will be designated as a Candidate for Accreditation, which is a pre-accredited designation assigned to those schools which meet the initial Conditions of Eligibility (see application) and have been accepted for ongoing review toward ACCS school accreditation.
- D. Candidates may then proceed to schedule a previsit, complete a self-study, host a site visit, and demonstrate compliance and excellence according to the standards listed below. Candidates have one year from notification of their candidacy status (for initial or renewal accreditation) to submit their self-study.

SECTION 2 STANDARDS

To be granted ACCS accreditation subsequent to meeting the requirements for approval as a Candidate for Accreditation, a school must demonstrate that it has successfully met the following Criteria for Accreditation and that it can reasonably be expected to continue to meet these standards.

- **A. Mission, Vision and Planning.** The school must show evidence that it is and has been meeting its published school mission and goals, that its vision is consistent with the ACCS, and that it engages in a planning process.
 - **A.i. Classical Christian Commitment:** The school must demonstrate that it promotes itself as a classical Christian school, has a mission and vision statement, a statement of faith, that school programs incorporate these statements, and that it serves the cause of Christ consonant with the distinctives of ACCS.
 - a. Principle: A school must publish its mission and vision statement and statement of faith to inform parents of what the school is all about and for a degree of public accountability. This ensures that a) the school has drafted mission and vision statements and a statement of faith, and b) that the school is following each and all are consistent with those of ACCS.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. "Classical Christian" is prominent on the school's website and in its marketing materials.
 - ii. "Preparatory school" language, if used, is clarified to emphasize a classical Christian priority.
 - iii. Language in school documents that defines marriage, gender, and human sexuality according to historical biblical understanding.
 - e. Documentation: All must be published.
 - i. Mission Statement
 - ii. Vision Statement
 - iii. Statement of Faith (must include a definition of marriage and gender)
 - iv. Explanation in the self study must describe how Scripture is integrated into school programs and curriculum

- **A.2. Strategic planning:** The school board has a mid-term and long-range plan for the overall improvement of the school.
 - a. Principle: The school must have a board-developed and approved long-range plan in place that addresses future improvements in the school and which takes into account the facility and grounds, growing financial resources, curricular reviews, the effectiveness of the faculty to teach in a classical Christian method and the application of the Seven Laws of Teaching, constituent support and community outreach, tuition, salaries, and enrollment, among other needs of the school.

- i. The plan provides detail about who is responsible for different aspects and specifies timelines and targets.
- ii. The plan covers a term of five years into the future.
- e. Documentation:
 - i. School's mid- and long-range plan
 - Notes explaining how the plan was developed and how it is currently being used by the board and administration
- B. Accountability, Independence, and Stability. The school must demonstrate these qualities in several areas.
 - **B.1. Financial Stability:** The school must be able to document general stability with respect to financial resources and continuing constituent support for the school mission.
 - a. Principle: ACCS wants to accredit a school that is viable. A school that demonstrates stability/growth, over time, in the areas listed above can generally be expected to continue to thrive in its operation.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Accredited schools typically receive at least 80% of their income from student tuition.
 - e. Documentation will show:
 - i. Annual budget (showing year to-date income and expenditures)
 - ii. Profit and loss statements for the past three to five years
 - iii. Note: Comments should explain whether or not a school is borrowing income from the following year to meet current year obligations.
 - **B.2. Financial Independence:** The school's financial support must not create an environment where a single donor (or a single external funding source) has the potential to threaten the future operation of the school by withdrawing support, or attaching new guidelines to funding that would threaten the school's mission. Similarly, if any single financial source through a third-party scholarship program or para-government organization represents a significant portion of the school's budget, it must not encumber or threaten the mission of the school.

a. Principle: As previously stated, ACCS wants to accredit a school that is viable. The school must disclose its financial support and explain how these resources make the school viable in the long term. Also, the ACCS accredits schools that are independent and at which the board of directors can act without outside coercion, in the interest of the stated mission of the school.

e. Indicators:

- i. Any donor or funding source controlled by a single entity, government, or person that makes up more than 20% of the operating budget.
- ii. A clear, documented, and specific financial plan, should a single funding source be lost.
- iii. A reserve fund equal to 10% of the annual operating budget.
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Anonymous list of donor contributions
 - ii. Budget that shows the total amount of donations relative to total budgeted revenue
 - iii. Report showing financial support and/or in-kind gifts from its constituency (which may include products and/or services) to the school, as well as all situations where any individual (or external source) contributes a significant portion of the budgeted school income per year
 - iv. An explanation of these financial arrangements and what they mean to the school
- B.2.a States with universal tuition support (e.g., Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) or vouchers): These revisions apply to schools located in states that provide a significant amount of financial support to parents for use in private school education. Particularly programs that are not restricted to low-income families. Revenue from these sources may exceed 20% of a school's budgeted tuition income.
 - a. Principle: While ACCS is thankful that ESAs and vouchers make private school tuition more afford-ble, we view the state funding of tuition as much of a threat as an opportunity. We are concerned that these funding programs may prove to be a modern Trojan horse. As noted in standard B.I., accredited schools must be financially stable, and many schools may not be stable if they reject all participation in these programs. Short-term stability may require significant involvement in these programs, however, we believe long-term stability requires measures to mitigate against the potential loss of these funds.

e. Indicators

- i. Schools take steps to mitigate against the potential loss of these funds and remain positioned to end participation in these programs to ensure faithfulness to the school's mission. Steps might include any of all of the following measures:
 - 1. Schools limit receipt of these funds to a set percentage of budgeted revenue.
 - 2. Schools allocate some funds to establish a reserve fund.

- 3. Schools limit the amount of available funds that they will accept per student below the state allocation to ensure that parents are responsible for at least part of the student's tuition
- ii. Schools establish a reserve fund to be used if participation in these programs threatens the school's mission. The amount of the reserve fund sufficient to keep the school operating for a time absent state funds.]

e. Documentation should include:

- Board-approved policy or guidelines that describe the board's rationale for the school's participation in ESA programs.
- ii. Documents that describe the board's plans to mitigate against the potential loss of this funding.
- iii. Budget that shows the total amount of ESA revenue relative to total budgeted revenue.
- iv. Financial plans to be followed if the school must cease receipt of these state funds.
- v. Examples of how the school communicates to parents about participation in these funding programs.
- vi. Language submitted when applying for participation in the program expressing the school's right to operate according to their religious beliefs. (ACCS has sample language from ADF for schools to review.)
- **B.3.** Outside Influence: The original voucher policy was reviewed given new instruments for government funding models, including those that offer private vehicles with strings attached. Voucher Policy 5.09 was replaced with Outside Influence Policy 5.10.
 - a. Principle: ACCS-accredited schools may not accept funds if the school is required to sign an agreement with the government or an outside organization to access the funding if that agreement creates a future obligation, or, if by statute, accessing the fund obligates the school to future obligations by the state or another agency besides the ACCS. In other words, if the school stops accepting the funding, any strings must immediately be severed.

e. Indicators:

- i. ACCS-accredited schools may not accept funds that create future obligations. All obligations must end when the school stops accepting such funds.
- ii. ACCS may refer to "The ABCs of School Choice," published by EdChoice, to help evaluate the specific requirements of an outside funding source.

e. Documentation shall include:

- i. School policies or written statements (if any) that address acceptance of outside funding
- ii. A list of outside funding sources, government or private, along with an explanation of obligations required to receive these funds.
- iii. Financial document that shows source(s) of tuition revenue

- **B.4. Financial Accountability**: The school must provide a financial accountability report verified by an independent accounting source.
 - a. Principle: ACCS believes schools should operate with a high level of financial accountability. We also recognize that a formal "accounting audit" may be excessive and expensive for the required purpose. Therefore, at a minimum, an examination by an independent, qualified person, whether an accountant or bookkeeper not directly associated with the school, provides an objective look at how the school conducts its financial business internally. This type of accounting review is sufficient.

- i. An "independent, qualified person" may make recommendations to the school regarding how to improve its financial operations.
- ii. The Financial Integrity Requirements (See Appendix B) provide the basis for this review.

e. Documentation:

- i. Include responses to the questions in the Financial Integrity Requirements provided separately.
- ii. A CPA may not be the best source to complete this report. A person knowledgeable about business financial management and who is independent of the school will suffice.
- **B.5. Public Perception:** The school must have been free of public ethical scandal or have taken appropriate action in resolving the same.
 - a. Principle: ACCS does not want to represent as "accredited" a school that has an unresolved public ethical scandal. The operative word is "unresolved." We all live in a sinful world, and so sin at some point is not improbable for even an accredited school. The issue is how it is dealt with if it should occur.

e. Indicator:

- i. Any major conflict has been resolved, insofar as it depends on the member school within the boundaries of its mission and governance, at the time of application and accreditation.
- e. Documentation will provide:
 - i. A statement printed on school letterhead signed by the head of school or board chairman
- **B.6. Enrollment and Employment Stability:** The school must disclose data for the past five years in the following areas along with an explanation of the trends and what they mean for the school: student enrollment and retention rates; retention of school administrators; teacher retention rate (year by year). Employee attrition and retention must indicate stability and support for the school mission.
 - a. Principle: Total enrollment numbers for stable schools are generally consistent over time. However, stable schools sometimes see a decline in enrollment for a short time, for reasons related to maintaining faithfulness to the school's founding mission and vision. In such cases, schools should explain the reasons for such a decline.

- i. Actual student enrollment numbers will equal budgeted student enrollment numbers.
- ii. Student retention rates are greater than 80%. Use this formula: number of students who left the school between September 30th of the prior year and September 30th of the current year, not including graduates, as a percentage of the current year's overall enrollment.
- iii. Student enrollment should not show an overall year-to-year decline of more than 10%.
- e. Documentation will include:
 - i. Enrollment numbers for the past five years showing grammar enrollment, secondary enrollment, and total enrollment
 - ii. Teacher retention rate for the past five years
 - iii. Administrator retention rate for the past five years
- **C.** Governance and Administration. The school must have established adequate structures and procedures for governance and administration to achieve its mission.
 - **C.1. Constitutional Organization:** The school must have a written constitution and/or bylaws that clearly and comprehensively provide a basis for school administration and governance; lines of authority and areas of responsibility must be explicit.
 - a. Principle: A school must know the reason for its existence, how it is structured, and the lines of authority so that it can operate smoothly and consistently. The adoption and publication of these standards help develop a trusting relationship between the school and both parents and the local community.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Members of the staff are aware of the limits and extent of their decision-making authority.
 - e. Documentation:
 - i. School by-laws or similar documents must be included.
 - ii. Notes should explain the governance structure of the school. Also, identify specific sections of the by-laws that define items included in this standard.
 - **C.2. Board Governance:** The school must have a board of control that determines policy in the areas of administration, business management, academic affairs, and student life, as evidenced by a single, comprehensive policy manual. The board shall ensure that it manages conflict of interest issues in its own composition and its oversight of the school.
 - a. Principle: "Board members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies, as well as by making sure the nonprofit has adequate resources to advance its mission" (National Council of

Nonprofits). Regardless of the governance model used at the school, boards must demonstrate a focus on these duties as opposed to spending time on the day-to-day operations of the school. This requirement does not preclude conflict of interest issues for board members, but does require that there be a mechanism for managing conflict of interest issues.

e. Indicators:

i. The policy manual is referenced and understood by members of the administrative team. In other words, it is demonstrated that the manual is not a "dust collector," but is actually used.

e. Documentation:

- i. Policy manual (or other governance documents)
- ii. Board minutes from the last 6 to 12 months
- iii. Identify the location for the conflict of interest policy. See the sample Conflict of Interest policy at the National Council of Nonprofits website.)
- iv. Notes should explain where all policies exist, i.e., is there a separate policy manual or do policies exist in handbooks? If policies are in the faculty or parent-student handbook, include them as well. Identify the specific sections in these documents that address items in this standard.
- C.3. Board of Directors: Board members must meet ACCS and documented school standards for their office and must be able to articulate, at an appropriate level, the classical Christian vision for their school. The board must provide adequate training for all board members in classical Christian philosophy and school board practices common to long-term ACCS-accredited schools.
 - a. Principle: Board members, collectively, are the guardians of the vision and success for the school. Classical Christian Educations' paradigm challenges the common understanding of school to such a degree that vision drift is easy and common. For this reason, board members must be carefully selected and trained to understand, appreciate, and deeply support the foundations of the classical Christian vision.

e. Indicators:

- i. Board members sign a statement of faith and conflict of interest statement.
- ii. A training plan for board classical Christian philosophy and function is in place and practiced.
- iii. Board selection processes will require prospective members to learn and show that they understand classical Christian philosophy and pedagogy.
- iv. All board members are regularly engaged in learning, particularly about classical Christian education through demonstrated participation in ACCS conference attendance, selected readings in classical Christian education, webinar or onsite training, mentoring, conference recordings, attendance at parent education events, OR other training and development.

v. Annual improvement activities are conducted including board self-evaluations or readings on board best practices.

e. Documentation:

- i. Policies regarding the qualifications, election, and training of board members will be included
- **C.4. Executive Leadership:** The school's head administrator must have a clear job description, obviously act as the liaison between the board and staff, and be sufficiently available to the teachers for support and guidance. Schools must have a policy ensuring that the head of school receives an annual evaluation from the board. Boards must complete an annual evaluation for the head of school.
 - a. Principle: Just as Christ is the head of the Church, there was a chief priest in the Old Testament temple system, and as a husband is the head of a family, so too a school as an organization must follow this pattern with a single leader/representative as the head of school. He represents the school to the board, the board to the school, and the school to the community. He may have others to support and aid him in this task, but he is the leader of the entire school and accountable for its sound operation. He provides uniformity and consistency in the day-to-day operation of the school. A well-written job description protects both the administrator and the board.

e. Indicators:

- i. Have a written set of attributes or virtues that are aspirational for the head of school position.
- ii. Schools are expected to have one head administrator.

e. Documentation will show:

- i. Head of school job description
- ii. Document or policy outlining process for head of school's annual evaluation
- iii. Note whether or not the head of school has received a formal evaluation from the board in each of the past five years (those completed evaluations should NOT be included in the self-study)
- **C.5. Conflict Resolution:** The school must have constructed and promulgated biblical and public policies for resolving school conflicts concerning policies, administrators, faculty, and students.
 - a. Principle: Although not all possible situations can be anticipated, a general process for locally addressing conflicts at/within the school are mandatory because Jesus said that all men will know His disciples by how they treat one another in love. The Bible provides general guidelines for addressing/resolving conflict, and these need to be followed by those who are in submission to Christ. Where there are a large number of people, there will be sin. Schools must prepare for inevitable conflicts and develop principled guidelines in anticipation of difficulties, not in reaction to them.

e. Indicators:

i. In general, policies should have conflict dealt with between the affected parties, and then bring in an appropriate chain of command if the grievance escalates.

- ii. Grievances found in the official record should show examples of the organizational adherence to these principles.
- e. Documentation will include:
 - i. Policy Manual
 - ii. Faculty Handbook
 - iii. Parent-Student Handbook
 - iv. Notes that identify the location of the grievance policy in the handbooks
- C.6. Records: The school must have complete, accurate, legible, and securely maintained records. These are to include board minutes, school personnel files, student files, and administrative reports.
 - a. Principle: A school must be able to professionally document what it is doing as well as provide for the privacy of the people it is serving. Security is required for certain documents such as student records and teacher performance reports, while other documents are more public in nature such as board minutes (usually). The school must demonstrate its maturity and professionalism by providing adequate handling procedures for all records.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Show a record plan for electronic records that provides for security and backup.
 - ii. Files should demonstrate completeness, all documentation is in one location, and a standard organization for each type of file.
 - e. Documentation: This will be evaluated during the site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify where these records are stored. Visit committees will examine records for completeness and consistent organization.
 - Notes should also identify any policy that defines general record retention policies.
- C.7. Health, Security, and Statutory Requirements: The school must meet state and local health, safety, and security requirements as well as any state statutory requirements for operating a private school.
 - a. Principle: The state, county, and municipal authorities have requirements for health and safety which, in general, are consistent with a biblical view of civil government, and ACCS desires to support these requirements when they are not in conflict with Scripture. Schools have a responsibility "in loco parentis" to provide for the physical well-being of students entrusted to their care.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. How does the school comply with the state's compulsory education law (for example, number of school days)?
 - e. Documentation:
 - i. Documentation should identify the state and local requirements for private schools.

19 Revised March 13, 2024

- ii. Health: Note requirements and compliance with vaccination reporting. For example, if your school is required to do CPR or concussion training, please document this.
- iii. Safety: Include certificates from annual fire inspections or building inspections and any risk management reports.
- iv. Security: Show emergency management or disaster response plans and training.
- v. State laws: Demonstrate requirements and compliance with laws concerning length of the school year and other requirements specified by the state in which the school resides.
- D. Cultivation of Student Virtue (II Peter 1:5–6, Phil 4:8) and the School Community. The school must recognize that its missional success is tied to a systemic school community, and that all aspects of the school's operation should seek to bring about the cultivation of Christian virtue and living.
 D.I. Admissions Process: The school must exercise family and student admissions and retention policies that are consistent with the school's mission (missional or covenantal), and that support a biblical Christian ethos of the school.
 - a. Principle: Schools are made up of students, faculty, and programs. Each plays a vital role in forming paideia in students. If families enroll that uphold values in juxtaposition with the school community, they will disrupt the school's ethos. In other words, students will be in conflict over acceptance of what is taught, and what is present in the community. This is particularly evident with false values around LGBT inclusion or non-Christian enrollment (Mormon, Muslim).

- i. Careful admissions policies that screen students based on specific criteria are in place.
- ii. The person responsible for family interviews can articulate the types of families the school admits and how he or she determines their qualification.
- e. Documentation should show:
 - i. Written admissions policies and guidelines that describe the school's goals with respect to the religious makeup or the constituency of the school.
 - ii. Written admissions policies and guidelines that may include direction regarding unbelievers or those who openly practice non-biblical life choices.
- **D.2. Aesthetics:** The school must apply appropriate aesthetic standards to its classrooms, hallways, facilities, programs, and staff.
 - a. Principle: The standards of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are humane, intertwined, and God-given. Students, faculty, and parents are influenced greatly by aesthetic standards. "Higher" rather than "vulgar" (low) standards help create a learning environment that depicts transcendence. Classical influences in art help to ground classical schools in the transcendent. While not the only "beautiful"

form of art, the classical forms of music, art, performance, and architecture are less likely to reflect modern false-values connected with individualistic expression.

e. Indicators:

- Schools should demonstrate the application of their educational philosophy through the school's decor.
- ii. The Western canon of thought (writings and great books), literature, fine art, theater, and music are used in such a way as to build appreciation and affection for them.
- iii. Important and classical works of great art are given prominent place and presence in the school environment. Older forms that were based in a pursuit of ideal truth, goodness, and beauty are elevated examples. Products of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and music are rightly assessed and ordered in the school environment, with earlier art given more prominence. Modern works tend to be subjective and individualistic in nature.
- e. Documentation: This will primarily be evaluated during the on-site visit.
 - i. If the school has relevant documentation, such as an aesthetic vision or directions to teachers on classroom decor, that could be included here.
 - ii. Most curricular items will be included in the curriculum guide. A listing of example items not included in the curriculum guide such as theatrical plays, ambient music choices, or music chosen for chapel (or equivalent) will be helpful.
- **D.3. Habits and Manners:** Habits, manners, and decorum of the students and staff should comport with Christian and Western tradition appropriate to the mission of the school.
 - a. Principle: Schools help to transfer a way of life (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 22:6). Habits practiced from an early age often become part of a person's nature and often become common practice in a Christian community. One of the great educational errors of our age is the notion that education is merely information and skills transfer. Schools must work against this widely held pressure as they cultivate the soul to love truth, goodness, and beauty. Classical Christian education is concerned with the moral and spiritual training schools provide to students.

e. Indicators:

- Order and joy should be evident throughout the school community.
- ii. Classroom and school-wide practices in manners and politeness should be evident.
- iii. As appropriate, regular practices in prayer, song, and memory should be present in the school day.
- iv. Student dress code and grooming standards should be documented, and consistent with the principles above.
- e. Documentation:

- i. Include examples of liturgical readings, hymns, or other sacred songs formally used in the community.
- ii. Policies or written expectations for students should include:
 - Habits /etiquette
 - Uniforms
 - Order
- iii. Observed joy. (This will be evaluated on site.)
- **D.4. Activities:** Non-classroom activities are consistent with the school's vision for providing moral and spiritual training to students.
 - a. Principle: Virtue formation requires that all school-sponsored events are aligned with the vision and mission of a classical school.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. How do your activities flow out of your mission and vision statements?
 - ii. Expectation for student behavior in activities is commensurate with expectations in the school.
 - iii. Spiritual qualifications, conduct, and discipleship practices for coaches are comparable to spiritual standards for teachers.
 - e. Documentation will include:
 - i. Handbooks or guidelines for coaches or other supervisors of co-curricular activities
 - ii. Policies on students' participation in these activities
 - iii. Hiring policies for coaches, etc., or a list of qualifications for staff holding these positions
- D.5. Discipline: The school has and adheres to adequate overall discipline and behavioral standards.
 - a. Principle: The school must have a policy or policies that define how discipline is effectively established and consistently maintained at the school. It should be evident to visitors in the hallways and on the playground as well as in the classrooms. Schools must establish a well-ordered environment that facilitates instruction and learning. Students also learn many lessons by the manner in which discipline is handled at the school.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Clearly communicated standards like postings, handbooks, etc.
 - ii. Environment of student respectfulness toward adults, and staff toward their respective authorities.
 - iii. Male/female students exercise appropriate discretion in their relationships.
 - e. Documentation: The practical application will be observed during the on-site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify the policies related to student discipline in the policy manual, faculty manual, and parent-student handbook.

- **D.6. Male and Female Roles:** The school encourages male/female roles that are consistent with biblical Christian virtues. Leadership is encouraged in different ways between boys and girls.
 - a. Principle: "God created them male and female." The distortions of our age often cause us to ignore important Christian distinctions in the virtues and the roles of men and women. Christians affirm the equality of the sexes, while rejecting the "sameness" of the sexes, either in nature or purpose. Part of cultivating virtue is to appropriate the right virtues and to help students live according to scriptural standards.

- i. Practice and training in manners, with male/female distinctive roles.
- ii. Policies against ambiguous dress and/or other grooming styles that may promote ambiguous appearance among students.
- iii. In sports or PE, boys and girls do not compete in ways that might encourage boys to be rough with girls.
- iv. Events that focus on distinctives between the sexes, for example, protocol events, social events, etc.
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Examples of indicative policies in training, handbooks, communications, activities, or manuals
 - ii. Operational documents outlining the philosophy or practice for dances, dating, etc.
- **D.7. In Loco Parentis:** Parents are the authority from which the school operates and must therefore work in concert with the school in educating their children.
 - a. Principle: God calls parents, specifically fathers, to raise their children in the education of the Lord (Ephesians 6, Deuteronomy 6). As schools, our authority must therefore be delegated from the parents, not the state or the church.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Fathers, in particular, are held to some account for addressing school-related concerns.
 - ii. Enrollment documents make this responsibility clear to parents.
 - iii. The school has policies that, by enrolling, parents are joining with the school and delegating authority. If they will not support key aspects of school policy, they are advised not to enroll.
 - e. Documentation will show:
 - i. Public documents or communication stating the school's in loco parentis position
 - ii. Communications to parents that educate them about the school's mission, vision, and programs

- **E. Curriculum.** The school must provide adequate classical Christian curriculum requirements to achieve its mission. The content and goals of the entire curriculum should be challenging and of high quality.
 - **E.i.** Academic Goals: The school must be able to document that its program is meeting its published goals for student achievement and advancement.
 - a. Principle: Not only must a school publish what its goals are, but it must demonstrate in a concrete way that it is meeting those goals.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Periodic worldview interviews with students
 - ii. Exit interviews of events with graduates
 - e. Documentation will include:
 - i. Description of a graduate
 - ii. Results from parent surveys
 - iii. Do not include achievement test scores or high-school graduation requirements for this standard.
 - **E.2. Program and Graduation Requirements:** The complete school program inclusive of graduation requirements must be well-organized, realistic, and publicized in its entirety.
 - a. Principle: Schools seeking accreditation should be able to address in detail what is required in the way of coursework, credits, and accomplishments for a student to graduate from their school. In addition, these criteria must be published where parents and others can readily find them, and they must be consistent with the ACCS mission and vision. By establishing graduation requirements, a school demonstrates that it has considered both the scope and the culmination of its academic program.
 - e. Indicators:
 - A rhetorical thesis presentation required for every graduate (not specifically a senior thesis).
 - e. Documentation will show:
 - i. Published high-school graduation requirements
 - ii. School profile
 - iii. Description of Diploma tracks. All ACCS-authorized diplomas must have requirements that meet ACCS academic standards. Certificates of completion are not considered diplomas.
 - **E.3. Complete Curriculum:** The school must provide adequate classical Christian curriculum requirements to achieve its mission. The content and goals of the entire curriculum should be challenging and of high quality. The entire curriculum must be documented in a clear and specific manner within the school's curriculum guide(s).
 - a. Principle: The original Latin meaning of curriculum is "the course, the path, the road." A school must know what it is teaching in each class at each grade level. This information is contained in the school's

curriculum guide(s). Curriculum guides demonstrate planning and are an effective means for the school to provide accountability for the content of classroom instruction.

e. Indicators:

- i. The curriculum guide must be a published document that has been approved by the proper authority at the school.
- ii. Curriculum materials should be detailed enough to guide classroom instruction. This is most often accomplished through the inclusion of objectives, though not excessively.
- iii. Good discussion questions are part of the written curriculum.
- iv. A documented sequence over time is necessary to create pacing for teachers within the curriculum.
- v. The objective of a lesson includes virtue development as well as knowledge and skill development. "The student will know" and "The student will be able to" are not the only, or even the primary, purpose of education.
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Curriculum guides for grammar and secondary school
 - ii. A document that shows all courses taught in the grammar and secondary schools
 - iii. One example of how the written curriculum for a particular course is designed to fulfill a part of the vision for graduating students

E.4. Academic Program Requirements: The academic program must require the following for all students:

- **E.4.A Phonics:** For all schools in their elementary academic program, instruction in reading through use of phonics
 - a. Principle: Teaching children how to pronounce new words is essential to developing reading skills. "English is a phonetic language, which a child can quickly learn to read if he or she is taught the sounds of the various letters or combinations of letters" (Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, p. 31). "Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. For example, the sound k can be spelled as c, k, ck or ch. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out. For example, when a child is taught the sounds for the letters t, p, a and s, they can start to build up the words: "tap", "taps", "pat", "pats" and "sat" (National Literacy Trust).

e. Indicators:

- i. A phonics-based reading curriculum in K, 1st, and 2nd. However, some "sight words" consistent with phonics pedagogy are expected
- ii. The absence of whole-word-based pedagogy in grammar school
- e. Documentation:

- Provide notes that identify the sections in the grammar curriculum guide that includes phonics instruction.
- **E.4.B Latin or Greek:** At least four years of Latin or Greek instruction, with at least two years in the secondary (i.e., after sixth grade),
 - Note: A year is generally understood to be 120 hours of class time with an instructor over the course of an academic year, i.e., a Carnegie unit.
 - a. Principle: For membership, ACCS requires that a school teach at least two years of Latin or ancient Greek. Because ACCS accreditation has a higher bar than membership, accredited schools must require a minimum of four years of either language, with at least two of those years after the sixth grade. Teaching these languages also helps students develop their writing skills and facilitates their participation in the "great conversation" of Western civilization.

i. This refers to requirements for students attending the school K-12.

e. Documentation:

- i. Provide notes that identify the pages in the curriculum guides for the Latin courses. Notes should specify the number of days per week and the length of class periods for Latin courses.
- **E.4.**C **Logic and Rhetoric:** For all schools in their secondary education, provide at least one year each of formal logic and formal rhetoric.
 - Note: A year is generally understood to be 120 hours of class time with an instructor over the course of an academic year, i.e., a Carnegie unit.
 - a. Principle: Logic and rhetoric are two elements in the Trivium, and should influence the teaching methods throughout their respective phases. As specific courses, logic and rhetoric provide students with some of the most powerful tools of learning. These requirements reflect only the bare minimum for membership in ACCS.

e. Indicators:

- i. In addition to the time requirement cited here, it is expected that logical and rhetorical tools will be integrated into other courses. This standard presumes such integration; however, this standard requires discrete instruction in logic and rhetoric.
- ii. A rhetorical thesis presentation is required for every graduate (not specifically a senior thesis).

e. Documentation:

- Provide notes that identify the pages in the curriculum guides for the logic and rhetoric courses.
 Notes should specify the number of days per week and the length of class periods for logic and rhetoric courses.
- ii. High-school graduation requirements should address these courses.

E.4.D Western Civilization: Significant study in Western history and a canon of Western literature,

a. Principle: Because history is the revelation of God's created order in time and on earth, and because the ACCS mission "is both to promote the classical approach, and provide accountability for member schools to ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost again," we require schools to teach children their Christian heritage which has developed predominantly through the West.

e. Indicators:

- i. Many schools have found benefit in using more primary sources than textbooks in the secondary.
- ii. Children's literature used in the classroom represents the classical canon for children.
- iii. The secondary school has students read a significant portion of the Western canon of works in translations as close to the original as practical.
- iv. Socratic and ethical discourse are evident in the treatment of great texts.
- v. The school's definition of the "Western Canon" is based in some accepted tradition (Harvard Classics, The Great Books of the Western World, generally accepted tradition, etc.)

e. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify at least some of the areas in the curriculum guides that relate to these subjects. Notes should also describe when students receive training in these subjects.
- ii. List the Western Canon texts read in grades 7–12.

E.4.E Writing: Training in writing (both prose and poetry), grammar, spelling, and composition

a. Principle: Because ACCS wants graduates who are capable communicators, which includes their ability to write, this requirement is included and reflects the need for instruction at all levels of the Trivium, from the early grammar stage where students learn spelling and English grammar, to the rhetoric years where compositions are required. The rhetoric stage presumes that students now have independent thoughts and ideas and that these students must be taught to communicate eloquently and persuasively.

e. Indicators:

- i. Prose and poetry should be apparent at all stages of the Trivium in an age-appropriate format. (progymnasmata).
- ii. Writing practices will incorporate logical defense and the classical rhetorical form (reference progymnasmata, Cicero, Quintilian).

e. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify courses in the curriculum guides where students are taught to write poetry and prose. Also, remember to include student writing in the samples of student work.
- **E.4.F Bible:** Training in the Scriptures should include and foster a well-integrated scriptural understanding of all subjects.

a. Principle: ACCS is committed to the restoration of our Christian culture which is grounded on the Bible. It is necessary that ACCS schools have courses that study the Bible, but that by itself is not sufficient. As this standard indicates, biblical integration is essential.

e. Indicators:

- i. The Scriptures must permeate every course of instruction since all knowledge derives from Christ (Col. 2:3).
- ii. Teachers take advantage of the natural opportunities in their lessons to integrate Scripture, while respecting the plain context of the scriptural passage. It is not expected that every lesson observed by the visit committee will include scriptural integration.
- e. Documentation: This will also be evaluated during the site visit.
 - i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in the Scriptures. Also include information that tells what Bible reading students complete. Give examples of how the Scriptures are integrated into other subjects.
- **E.4.G Mathematics:** Training is required in general mathematics, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, at a minimum, with trigonometry offered, but not required.
 - a. Principle: God is the source of order in the universe, and it is expected that proficiency with numbers is necessary for a graduate from an accredited ACCS school. Note that both arithmetic and geometry are liberal arts. While mathematical rigor is encouraged, the specific course selections should be consonant with the mission of the school.

e. Indicators:

- Students are required to complete through Algebra II and have an option to take a pre-calculus course.
- ii. Math teachers understand the unique contribution of the quadrivium in its relationship to the classical liberal arts.

e. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in math. Also provide an explanation as to what courses are required and what are elective courses.
- **E.4.H Science:** Training in general science, biology, chemistry, and an opportunity to take physics, science instruction supports student's faith in Scripture.
 - a. Principle: All order in creation derives from the Creator, and it is important to ensure students have a rudimentary understanding of how that creation is structured. These courses provide that rudimentary level of knowledge and understanding. Wherever practical, these subjects should be taught in a form consistent with natural philosophy and natural history, the classical tradition that orients the natural world to its relationship with the divine Creator's form and purpose.

- i. Students interviewed by the visit committee will demonstrate confidence in the truth of Scripture, especially as they express personal beliefs in creation.
- ii. Scientism (the belief that the scientific method is the path to ultimate truth) is identified and refuted in favor of knowing God through His natural revelation.

e. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify courses where students receive training in science. Also provide an explanation as to what courses are required and what are elective courses.
- ii. Include policy or guidelines instructing teachers how to present creation.

E.4.I Theology:

a. Principle: Historically, theology has been considered the "queen of the Sciences." In other words, the study of God leads to all other knowledge. For this reason, classical Christian schools should train and teach either in the historic tradition of theology or in the narrower field of apologetics. Apologetics is instruction in how to give a defense of the Christian faith; it addresses the antithesis between Christ and all other religions, and how every thought needs to be brought captive to the lordship of Christ.

e. Indicators:

i. Sound biblical and theological components are regular components of discussions in all subjects.

e. Documentation:

i. Notes should identify the pages in the curriculum guide for the apologetics course **or training in theology**. Course objectives and textbook materials should also be included.

E.4.J.a Art: During the grammar and logic stages, the curriculum includes required instruction in the theory and practice of the visual arts. "Visual art" refers to drawing, painting, sculpture, etc. In the rhetoric stage, there are some required credits in fine arts (excluding music). "Fine arts" include the historic arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, and poetry, the performing arts of theatre and dance, and modern forms such as film, photography, and design. (Music, also a historic art, is addressed separately in standard E.4.J.b.)

a. Principle: ACCS is committed to truth, beauty, and goodness. These traits are found in every course but are the very heart of this requirement. "Instruction in the arts" does not include art appreciation, which is considered "general instruction." Art appreciation is embedded or included throughout the Trivium.

e. Indicators:

- i. Grammar and logic school students receive instruction in visual arts.
- ii. Rhetoric school students receive instruction in fine arts.
- iii. High-school graduation requirements include required credits to ensure training in fine arts.

c. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify visual arts training courses (not appreciation courses) required during the grammar and logic stage of the Trivium.
- ii. Class schedules for grammar school specials.
- iii. Identify relevant courses found in the curriculum guide.
- iv. Identify what elective choices logic and rhetoric students have.
- v. High-school graduation requirements.
- **E.4.J.b Music:** During the grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages, the students receive required instruction in the theory and practice of the music. Music can be inclusive of instrumental or vocal training. Instruction does not have to be a class (however, students should show evidence of vocal training when they sing).
 - a. Principle: ACCS is committed to truth, beauty, and goodness. These traits are found in every course but are the very heart of this requirement. "Instruction in the arts" does not include music appreciation, which is considered "general instruction." Music appreciation is embedded or included throughout the Trivium.

e. Indicators:

i. Students receive instruction in music in grammar, logic, and rhetoric schools.

c. Documentation:

- i. Notes should identify the music training courses (not appreciation courses) required during each stage of the Trivium. Or, if not in a class, when students regularly sing or play.
- ii. Class schedules for grammar school specials.
- iii. Identify relevant courses found in the curriculum guide.
- iv. Identify what elective choices logic and rhetoric students have.
- v. High-school graduation requirements.
- **E.5.** Academic Evaluation and Assessment: The academic program will be regularly evaluated by documented, annual administration of an appropriate, nationally recognized, standardized exam and other academic assessments that reflect classical pedagogy.
 - a. Principle: ACCS wants an objective means for our schools to evaluate how they are doing in instructing their students. Again, this criterion does not require that students be tested at each grade level, but only that they be tested at some regular, but unspecified intervals. Assessment using humane, thought-oriented oral, written, and discourse methods is also desired.

e. Indicators:

i. Testing assesses verbal and quantitative reasoning (sometimes called critical reading, math concepts, etc.) which are influenced by the classical method.

- ii. ACCS encourages schools to utilize the ERB CTP-5 standardized test but allows any of the others commonly available on the market, as long as the test does not direct the school's programs toward a state-standard like the Common Core.
- iii. The ACCS recommends the use of the Classic Learning Test wherever appropriate.

e. Documentation:

- i. Provide copies of class score reports as received from the testing service.
- ii. Schools may also add their own internally created reports. If so, be sure to identify what scores are being reported and how results were calculated. Does the school have targets for student learning; if so, what scores are used to measure this growth?
- iii. Most importantly, schools should explain how schools utilize test results. Is testing being conducted to appease parents? Are scores used to evaluate instruction, learning, or curriculum? Has the school completed an analysis to see how well the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the test curriculum match?
- **F. Faculty and Instructional Resources.** In this standard, we consider the essential role of a teacher. Teachers are called to lead students in the way of godliness by their own learning, virtue, and piety. Students follow their teachers in the way of godliness by imitating their example, heeding their precepts, and embracing the knowledge they impart. (Deut 4:9, Ps 78:1-8, Luke 6:40, I Corinthians II:I, Titus 2:7-8)
- **F.I. Faculty Requirements:** The school must demonstrate that each of its faculty meets the school's written requirements for the position(s) that they hold.
 - a. Principle: A school must have written requirements for hiring teachers which include either a specific job description or general standards of conduct, knowledge and teaching ability consistent with the subjects which the person has been hired to teach. These documents communicate that the school has considered what qualities are inherent in successful teachers and is thoughtfully applying these standards in hiring practices.

e. Indicators:

- i. ACCS-accredited schools have found greater success hiring inexperienced teachers who don't require re-training. A preference for hiring long-term public school teachers with experience suggests a lack of understanding of the distinctives of classical Christian pedagogy. It's very hard to successfully re-train a teacher.
- ii. Teachers must be professing Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23). Staff must be in agreement with and adhere to the school's Statement of Faith as part of the qualifications for their position of employment.

e. Documentation:

- i. Include updated documentation as provided with the application for candidacy status (list of teachers, academic degrees, and classes taught).
- ii. Show school's hiring policy (or documentation that defines qualifications to be a full-time teacher).
- iii. Notes and documentation should explain the school's policy and requirements for mandatory enrollment of children of full-time employees.
- iv. Notes should explain whether or not the school conducts criminal background checks on applicants.
- **F.2.** Class Size: The school must show that its program for assigning teaching responsibilities and student-faculty ratio is consonant with its stated goals. ACCS expects schools to be consistent with their own policy. ACCS does not have a specified class size. Schools have adopted class sizes for enhanced marketing, for facility limitations, or for tradition. ACCS recognizes that the adopted class size has a direct correlation on teacher salaries.
 - a. Principle: The school must have a policy that specifically defines how many students are assigned to a teacher. It is also important to note how many classes a teacher is assigned to teach each day, and what the allotted preparation time is for each class. The school wants to ensure that it is not running good teachers into the ground and as a consequence hampering student instruction.

e. Indicators:

- i. Overall student/teacher ratios for the school, maximum class size, and other limits on class size are published and followed.
- e. Documentation should indicate:
 - i. Policy on class size (or a published statement on class size used to market the school to prospective parents)
 - ii. Class rosters from the previous or current year
 - iii. Explain how many prep periods full-time grammar and secondary school teachers receive during the week
- **F.3. Books and Ad Fontes:** An obvious love and respect for reading and books should be evident throughout the entire school's program. For example, there should be a wide variety of literature available to the students in classroom and/or school libraries.
 - a. Principle: Christians are people of The Book. We put a high priority on the written word because God has done so in providing us with the Scriptures. There should be a visible emphasis placed on the importance of reading from the head administrator down, and on the quality and quantity of books available to students at each grade level.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Books in the school's holdings are curated for quality.

- ii. Students have ready access to "Great Books," original source material, and reference texts.
- e. Documentation: This will be observed during the on-site visit.
 - If the school has a summer reading program, include descriptive information here.
- F.4. Teacher Development: The school must have an established, ongoing teacher development program, which is consistent with the ACCS vision. This should include taking advantage of ACCS-approved conferences, training, audio/video recordings, and/or materials.
 - a. Principle: Because what ACCS is doing has not been done for well over a century and a half, we are working to re-establish a classroom model that has been essentially expunged and for which none of us has any personal recollection. Teacher training is essential to help prepare teachers and hone their teaching skills for the classroom. This is an ongoing need, not a one-time event. Teachers need to be continually challenged to think in terms that are not common to their past experience and instruction outside of ACCS.

e. Indicators:

- i. Teachers are able to describe the training program and how they participate in it.
- ii. The content of teacher training and development is unique to classical and/or Christian education.
- e. Documentation:
 - i. Show schedules from teacher training meetings provided during summer orientation programs as well as during the school year.
 - ii. Description of specific faculty training
- F.5. Pedagogy: In order to lead students into maturity, teachers must practice effective pedagogy consistent with practices and principles securely rooted in the classical Christian tradition of instruction. Instructional planning and teaching should employ the following principles:
 - a. Principle: ACCS accreditation places a high priority on assessing classroom instruction and student learning. True teachers do not merely dispense knowledge; they also inspire students to inquire and learn as they guide their students through a field of study. Gregory wrote, "True teaching is not that which gives knowledge, but that which stimulates pupils to gain it." The ACCS mission to "promote, establish, and equip member schools that are committed to a classical approach in the light of a Christian worldview" has been aided by the articulation and adherence to these principles of instruction. This list is representative, not exhaustive, of essential aspects of classical Christian pedagogy. In an accreditation review, site teams expect to see these principles in action, where they apply, as they observe classroom instruction. Team members understand that some of these principles do not naturally manifest in certain classroom interactions.
 - i. Teachers love their students, seeking their spiritual, intellectual, and physical good.
 - Teachers capitalize on natural opportunities that arise within the lesson to integrate the lesson with Scripture.

33 Revised March 13, 2024

- iii. Teachers frame lessons with purpose—that is, with an objective, goal, or learning target in view. Teachers also build into each lesson ways to assess the students" competency in order to ascertain whether that objective has been met. This assessment is observable in the students" own actions, expressions, or performances.
- iv. Teachers know the material they teach and offer a living example of competency with the material at hand.
- v. Teachers deploy language that students can understand, building from familiar to unfamiliar, with due attention to their maturity, experience, and prior knowledge.
- vi. Teachers enjoin students to attend to the material with interest and to participate earnestly in fruitful learning activities.
- vii. Teachers enjoin students to do the work of learning, requiring them to display their knowledge or skills in a manner that conduces to feedback, adjustment, correction, and encouragement.
- viii. Teachers leverage the fellowship within a classroom cohort to enjoin students to learn through one another.
- ix. Teachers revisit and review material to solidify what was learned previously and also to forge connections to new learning.
- x. In the younger grades, classroom methods emphasize the development and exercise of memory. Memorization should be an essential element of instruction in daily lessons.
- xi. Teachers incorporate age-appropriate pedagogy when instructing students in the younger grades. Such instruction aims to develop students' affections, preferences, and loyalties for truth, goodness, and beauty. It features stories, recitation, and songs and makes use of memory, imitation, experiences, and bodily activity.
- xii. Teachers incorporate age-appropriate pedagogy when instructing students in the middle grades. Such instruction aims to develop students' ability to analyze, make distinctions, draw inferences, solve increasingly complex problems, defend and refute positions, and build cohesive arguments. Instruction features classroom discussions in which students seek truth through dialogue; formulating and asking questions which further understanding; training in formal and respectful debate; writing assignments that require comparison, contrast, and analysis; and application of logic and knowledge.
- xiii. Teachers incorporate age-appropriate pedagogy when instructing students in the upper grades. Such instruction aims to foster the students' self-directed inquiry, industry, and creativity. It features discussions, presentations, and written compositions in which students formulate their own ideas and express them persuasively and in their own manner.
- xiv. Though certain tools of learning are emphasized at different stages, all student faculties should be developed throughout the curriculum. For example, rhetorical skills (delivery, projection,

eye contact, etc.) and critical reasoning are to be developed in all grades in age-appropriate ways, and students should continue to exercise and sharpen their memory in the upper grades.

- b. Indicators: This list of indicators is representative, not exhaustive:
 - i. Teachers exhibit delight to be in the company of their students. As opportunities arise, teachers stir students to godliness by encouragement, instruction, admonition, and correction.
 - ii. Teachers call attention to scripture–naturally, with neither triteness or clumsy affectation.
 - iii. Teachers identify a clear objective or learning target for each lesson. Teachers plan for and conduct frequent and involuntary checks for understanding during the lesson, and make adjustments tailored to the objective.
 - iv. Teachers are well-prepared for the lesson and demonstrate competence in the subject.
 - v. Teachers demonstrate an awareness of vocabulary, allusions, and ideas that may be new to students. Teachers adjust if students show signs of confusion or misunderstanding.
 - vi. Teachers ask questions that elicit thoughtful answers (beyond a simple "yes" or "no"), so that students participate actively and show interest in the lesson.
 - vii. Students are working rather than simply watching the teacher at work. Students communicate thoughts they have formulated for themselves—whether by working problems on the board, by discussing or debating, or other methods.
 - viii. Students observe and react to one another in furtherance of the lesson. In discussion settings, students consider and respond to their classmates directly as they voice their own contributions, instead of the teacher rephrasing each comment.
 - ix. Lessons include a review of prior material; such reviews are more than mere repetition, they forge new connections or applications
 - x. Younger students practice memory by recalling and proclaiming what they have learned, especially at the beginning or end of lessons, during transitions between subjects, etc.
 - xi. Younger students participate actively through bodily activity, song, and/or recitation.
 - xii. Students in the middle grades practice logic (i.e., they define, compare, contrast, infer, and analyze) as they discuss, write, debate, and present.
 - xiii. Students in the upper grades practice logic (see above) and rhetoric (i.e., they tailor their expression to audience and situation while attending to clarity and style) as they discuss, write, deliberate, and present.
 - xiv. Teachers assess students in rhetorical, critical reasoning, and memory skills in age-appropriate ways across the curriculum.
- e. Documentation:

Schools shall provide the following documentation. While such documentation attests to a school's compliance with this standard, more probative evidence of compliance arises from observations by the visit committee on site.

- i. Lesson plan forms indicating how teachers employ these principles in routine planning.
- ii. Actual lesson plans prepared by teachers, plans that best exemplify what an administrator expects from teachers. Include a week's worth of lessons from each teacher selected, and the administrator shall select various teachers representing a range of grade levels and subjects.
- iii. Classroom observation and teacher evaluation forms, indicating teachers receive routine feedback about their use of these principles.
- iv. Training plans and past training records should include material consistent with ACCS accreditation standards for classroom teaching.

e. Resources:

The principles informing this standard denote wisdom passed down to us by great educators through the ages. Many witnesses confirm these principles, some of which we identify here as resources useful for cultivating sound instructional practices in our schools. The contemporary renewal of classical Christian education emerged in the 1980s, and drew ideas from two key works: "The Lost Tools of Learning" by Dorothy Sayers, and *The Seven Laws of Teaching* by John Milton Gregory. Sayers' and Gregory's most fruitful ideas are reflected above in the Principles section of this standard. In addition, for a more complete grounding in the long history of classical and Christian pedagogy, we draw principles from a number of additional sources alongside Sayers and Gregory.

For general principles of pedagogy expressed in clear outline form, see Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, chs. 20-21 (which summarize the preceding chapters in this great work, which are excellent), as well as John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*. Johann Sturm discusses the specific exercises that comprise the daily work in schools in *For the Lauingen School*, "On Daily Exercises".

For principles regarding the relationship between teacher and student, see especially Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* II.2.5-8 and Augustine, *On Catechizing the Uninstructed*, ch 12. Another valuable source on the teacher-student relationship is Alcuin, *Disputatio Pippini* and *De Grammatica*.

In these writings Alcuin also highlights the virtuous, God-honoring ends to which teachers should direct all instruction, a key principle that others also address well, including Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, books I-II; Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* books I-II; and Comenius, *Great Didactic* chapters 1-6. Sturm addresses the necessary character of the teacher in *Correct Opening of Elementary Schools of Letters*, "The Office of Teachers of Letters".

Christian educators have long recognized that teachers should adapt their instruction to the maturity of their students. In addition to Dorothy Sayers" "The Lost Tools of Learning," which has helpfully

shaped many classical schools, we draw from other important sources, including Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* I.I-II.10 and Comenius, *Great Didactic*, chs. 27-31. Sturm emphasizes the required training in memory in younger grades in *Correct Opening of Elementary Schools of Letters*, "Training the Memory."

For instruction unique to younger students, aimed at forming their intuitions, appetites, and habits, see again Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, book I; and also Plato, *Republic*, 400(e)-402(a); Aristotle, *Politics*, VII.5-6 (1339b.40-1340b.30); John Chrysostom, *An Address on Vainglory* and the *Right Way for Parents to Bring up their Children*, 16-90; and Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, I.1.

Dorothy Sayers has influenced many for the innovative way she connects rudimentary instruction to the art of grammar; for historical witnesses to the method of instruction in the arts, with special attention to grammar, see especially Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* book III; also valuable are John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* I.24; Alcuin, *Disputatio Pippini*; Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* I.4; and Piccolomini, *The Education of Boys*, 40-98.

Note also Marshall MacLuhan's superb exposition of the trivium in *The Classical Trivium*.

Many of the works cited above also address instruction tailored to older students, to which we also add Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* II.1-10 and book X; and Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* books V-VII.

- **F.6. Classroom Observation:** The school shall have written procedures that describe regular and ongoing supervision and classroom observation of all teachers. Policies should require written year-end evaluations for every teacher.
 - a. Principle: Regular and ongoing supervision of teachers is necessary to ensure teachers continue to teach classically.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. Completed faculty evaluations include items for teachers to improve on. Evaluations don't solely consist of praise and positive affirmations.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Faculty Handbook, which shows policy addressing observation and supervision of teachers
 - ii. Job description of the administrator assigned these responsibilities
 - iii. Summary of specific faculty observations conducted during the previous year
- G. Student Work Samples. The school must provide sample student work along with the self-study.
 - a. Principle: This provides the visit committee with another means to evaluate the school.
 - e. Documentation: Include scanned copies of student work in these areas:
 - i. Assignments that show instruction in phonics

- ii. Writing assignments from all levels, especially ones showing teacher corrections, including two from logic school and two from rhetoric school
- iii. Examples of poetry writing from all levels
- iv. Examples of tests from all levels
- v. Assignments from Latin
- vi. Assignments from logic
- vii. A senior thesis (from rhetoric)
- viii.Photos of student art work

H. Standards for Renewal Accreditation.

- **H.I. Teacher Certification:** (Renewal Only) The school must provide a record of the implementation of the school's teacher certification plan and the status of each teacher in that plan. (See Appendix H, p. 64.)
 - a. Principle: The ACCS accreditation standards require that schools applying for ACCS accreditation agree to actively participate in the ACCS teacher certification process. This standard ensures that ACCS accredited schools are actually doing so.
 - e. Indicators:
 - i. The teachers are aware of their certification level and how it impacts them.
 - e. Documentation:
 - i. Provide teacher certification plan.
 - ii. Show status of teachers in the school's plan.
 - iii. Note: The school must submit its teacher certification plan to the ACCS Director of Accreditation for review and approval. The ACCS plan was updated in June, 2016.
- **H.2.** Addressing Recommendations and Discrepancies: (Renewal Only) Provide a letter from the school explaining the correction of each discrepancy and any action taken on each recommendation. (This requirement is found on the application for accreditation renewal.)
 - a. Principle: Schools submit this letter as part of the application for school renewal accreditation. To ensure that the Visit Committee receives this information, the same letter submitted with the application should be included here.
 - e. Documentation:
 - Provide a letter explaining the correction of each discrepancy and any action taken on each recommendation.
- I. Collaborative: See Appendix A for additional requirements for this endorsement.

J. State Guidelines: See Appendix E for additional requirements for these states:

- 1. Georgia School Accreditation
- 2. Iowa School Accreditation
- 3. Tennessee School Accreditation
- 4. Texas State School Accreditation
- 5. Virginia Council for Private Education

K. Requests for Substitutions or Adjustments:

In rare cases, a particular school does not comply with one of the accreditation standards. For example, a missional, service-oriented inner city school funded through private contributions may not conform to indicators for tuition-based funding. Or, a school's mission may serve learning-disabled students who may not conform to all requirements.

In such cases, schools should include requests for adjustments with the application for candidacy status. Such adjustments are only granted when the school is deemed to be in a highly unique situation and they have missional (not practical) reasons for requesting the adjustments.

Exceptions required because the school has a non-traditional model are covered under "Endorsements."

SECTION ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

3

This section describes the full procedure through which a school becomes accredited once the school has applied for accreditation and has achieved candidacy status.

A. Previsit Rationale

- 1. ACCS accredits schools that provide a specific form of education. Classical Christian education is not a flavor of education, it's a different philosophy of education. Because the form differs from other methodologies, the process of accreditation is necessarily structured differently.
- 2. A school may have accreditation from another association, but that doesn't assure the school of being prepared for ACCS accreditation. The ACCS accreditation process puts a premium on assessing the student experience, especially, but not exclusively, in the classroom.
- 3. As classical Christian education has become more popular, and as ACCS works to accredit a wider variety of school configurations, we have concluded that we need to do more to assist schools seeking initial accreditation to be prepared for a successful site visit.
- 4. In today's education marketplace, there are a number of voices claiming to define classical Christian education. For schools to successfully achieve ACCS accreditation, school leaders need to focus on explanations and standards identified and defined by ACCS.
- 5. All schools seeking ACCS initial accreditation must have an on-site pre-visit with the director of accreditation or a person selected by the director of accreditation. This is to ensure a person who has direct experience with the ACCS-accreditation process and standards. The sooner this is done after candidacy status is approved, the more time the school will have to address issues prior to the site visit.
- 6. This visit and subsequent report will not guarantee that a school will be recommended for initial accreditation, but it will give schools the opportunity to better understand what is expected and to have the opportunity to address and improve practices at the school to increase the likelihood of being recommended for initial accreditation.
- **B. Self-Study Documentation.** The school applying for accreditation must submit a self-study that substantiates how the school meets or exceeds each of the **Criteria for Accreditation**. Schools combine an electronic version of the Criteria for Accreditation, with documents ("show") and brief explanations ("tell") to create the documentation package. This documentation package must be received no later than one year from the date of the school's notification of having been approved as a Candidate for Accreditation, and sent to the ACCS Director of Accreditation for initial review and feedback. Failure to do so will likely result in the termination of the school's approval as a Candidate for Accreditation. This will require that the school restart the process and forfeit any fees already paid. Extensions may be granted in rare, special situations.

- 1. Two reviews of the self-study are commonly done. During the first review, the director of accreditation will review the self-study and send the review back to the school. The review will identify any work that needs to be completed and help the school to correct omissions. Typically, potential discrepancies are identified in this review. (Note: not all discrepancies included in the accreditation report are identified during the self-study review.) Suggestions for making the self-study easier to review by the visit committee are also included. Schools send the revised self-study back to the director of accreditation. The second review by the director of accreditation will focus primarily on items noted in the first review. Upon receiving a response from the second review, the director of accreditation will, at his discretion, advance to the next step in the process.
- 2. In the event that the school believes an adjustment or exception is needed to one of the standards based upon the self-study evaluation, the school's designated representative may send a letter of appeal to the director of accreditation. The director may choose to accommodate the school's request, or he may choose to escalate the matter to the ACCS President, who may approve the request, or forward the request to the ACCS Board of Directors. The board would consider the appeal at the next quarterly meeting. A decision on the matter will be passed through the president of the ACCS to the director of accreditation. The purpose of this process is to prevent such appeals from a first hearing after the expense of the visit.
- Once any deficiencies noted in the director of accreditation's review have been addressed, the school will be directed to send a copy of the documentation package to each member of an accreditation committee appointed by the director of accreditation. The following time-line and guidance applies:
 - a. The director of accreditation will request dates for the visit at least three to four months out to allow time for identifying the accreditation committee and time for them to review the school's documentation package.
 - e. Schools must provide all required/requested documentation directly to the visiting committee members at least three months prior to a desired visit. The director of accreditation will also provide any comments from his review to the committee.
 - e. The committee shall be given one month to read through all material prior to any flights being arranged. This will allow time for the committee to evaluate the suitability of a visit to the school based on the documentation review.
 - e. After reviewing the materials, the visit committee chair will inform the director of accreditation as to whether or not the committee believes a visit is warranted. If not, then the director of accreditation will notify the school with the stated reasons, and allow the school up to six months to address the indicated problems. If a school fails to address the problems, by default, the school must begin the process anew.
- 4. Once the committee agrees that the school merits a visit, the director of accreditation will notify the school to make local arrangements for the visit and have the committee members make their travel arrangements.

C. Accreditation Committee and Site Visit.

- On-site visits by an accreditation committee are required for accreditation.
- 2. An accreditation committee will be appointed by the director of accreditation. The committee will be composed of three or four people from among the ACCS Board of Directors (current or former, including former ACCS board members who have had experience on an ACCS Accreditation Committee), the director of accreditation, the headmaster (or equivalent) or administrator of an ACCS-accredited school, or administrators who have served at an ACCS-accredited school in the past five years. Preference will be given to committee members of equivalent or greater enrollment than the school being evaluated. Committee members may not be drawn from personnel attached to the school undergoing the accreditation, nor from anyone who served the school as a pre-accreditation consultant.
- All accreditation committee members are required to have read the most current version of the ACCS
 Accreditation Handbook which will be forwarded to them at least two months prior to the scheduled
 school visit.
- 4. The accreditation committee chair will be assigned the responsibility of overseeing the inexperienced committee members by helping instruct them in what to look for.
- 5. The accreditation committee is authorized to request additional information from the applying school if that information is essential to the accreditation process. No individual accreditation committee member is authorized to request information on his own; only the accreditation committee may request such information through the committee chair. The committee chair is appointed by the director of accreditation and will typically be the person on the committee with the most experience with ACCS accreditations.
- 6. The accreditation committee may call on the expertise of qualified persons who are not assigned to the committee to assist them on specific questions relating to the school accreditation if needed. Such persons will be listed in the report and the specific area(s) in which they provided assistance.
- 7. Accreditation committee members may not contact a school they visited for purposes of paid consultant work for one year following the date of the site visit.
- 8. Upon completion of the committee's visit:
 - a. Before leaving the school, the accreditation chair (and if possible all committee members) will meet with the head of school to verbally communicate general impressions that will be included in the written report that should be received within four weeks following the visit.
 - e. Draft written report. The accreditation committee will complete a written report within three weeks and send it to the director of accreditation for review. Any comments, either commendations or discrepancies, must be documented. The committee must substantiate, by example or illustration, all comments included in the report.

- i. The director of accreditation will review the written report for compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation.
- ii. Within one month of the site visit, the director of accreditation will send the written report to the school. The school may submit a written response within 30 days that will be attached to the report.
- e. The ACCS Director of Accreditation will make the recommendation to the ACCS President (or designee) and the visit committee chairman (or senior member). These three will serve as an ad-hoc committee. The ad hoc committee will make a determination on the recommendation. The following guidelines will govern the process of accreditation (or accreditation renewal) upon completion of the accreditation (or accreditation renewal) visit.
- e. The director of accreditation will report the committee's determination to the school along with any germane comments.

D. General Philosophy.

- 1. Notwithstanding all the previously listed items that must be complied with, it is important to realize that not all circumstances and situations can be adequately addressed in specifics in this accreditation policy. Scripture doesn't teach, and life is not best lived, by a simple set of check-boxes. Wisdom is always the God-given key.
- 2. It has always been the intent of ACCS to accredit schools in the most meaningful way.
- 3. It is for this reason that schools seeking accreditation must realize and permit the ACCS accreditors to delve into any matters that seem relevant to them that might not have been specifically listed above. Furthermore, it must be understood that a school seeking accreditation with ACCS may be turned down even though it has met all the criteria at a "technical" level. The failure would be because they did not meet the essence of what is intended by the specific written guidelines. Such a decision would automatically be appealed to the entire ACCS Accreditation Committee, by the director of accreditation, the president, and the affected school.
- **E. Accreditation Fees and Expenses.** The fee for the initial accreditation is \$4,000, \$2,000 of which is required with submission of the application for accreditation, and is non-refundable. The second half (\$2,000) is due on completion of the accreditation. The fee for school accreditation is separate from the expenses for travel, room, and board for the previsit and the accreditation committee on-site visit. Note: There is an additional fee (\$2,000) for multi-site visits requiring visits longer than normal.
- **F. Denial and Termination**. If the school is found to no longer be in compliance with a qualification or criteria required for candidacy or accredited status, ACCS may find it necessary to terminate a school's recognition as "ACCS accredited." If such action is under consideration, the director of accreditation will notify the head of school that a recommendation for termination has been made to the ACCS President. The school will have the opportunity to provide documentation relative to the matter. The president will make his

recommendation to the ACCS Board of Directors, who will vote on the recommendation. Once a decision to terminate a school's accredited status is made, the school must no longer promote itself as ACCS accredited.

G. Appeals Process.

- 1. There will be no change in the current accreditation status of a school pending disposition of an appeal.
- 2. The appealing school has the right to a hearing before the appeal body, either the ACCS Board of Directors (or committee authorized to hear the schools appeal).
- 3. The ACCS Board of Directors is the final arbiter in assigning ACCS-accredited status to ACCS-member schools. If a school is being recommended for anything other than accredited status, they may appeal the report and recommendation to the ACCS Board of Directors. The school will have 30 days to make their appeal in writing and provide sufficient documentation to substantiate their appeal. This appeal will be forwarded from the ACCS director of accreditation, to the ACCS President and to the ACCS board.
- 4. The ACCS Director of Accreditation will review and forward the appeal and supporting materials to the ACCS President, who will forward them to the board of directors, with his recommendation.
- The ACCS Board of Directors shall review the appeal and supporting documentation and make a determination on the appeal at their next quarterly meeting.
- 6. The ACCS Director of Accreditation shall respond in writing on behalf of the board of directors to the head of the appealing school with the board's final determination. A copy of the final disposition shall be sent (as required) to the applicable accreditation oversight organization(s) of which ACCS is a member along with a copy of the appeal and the school's supporting documentation.
- 7. Any expenses that may arise as a result of the appeal will be borne by the appealing school.
- 8. Appeals will not be permitted to schools that fail to undergo a renewal visit at the end of their probation period.
- **H. Accreditation Renewal.** All of the requirements in Sections 1 and 2 apply for accreditation renewal except as modified by the amplifying guidelines below:
 - I. Reapplication. Schools holding accredited status must re-apply within two years following their initial accreditation to maintain this status. Schools may receive renewal accreditation for a period of two or five years, based on the evaluation of the school by the assigned committee and the decision of the ACCS Board of Directors. At the end of this time, they must re-apply for renewal accreditation again in order to maintain their accredited status. (See section Section H.3, Probationary Status below for information on probation.)
 - 2. Committee size. On-site visits for accreditation renewal following a successful accreditation will consist of at least three members for small schools (one section at each grade level) and more for large schools (more than one section at some grade levels). For accreditation renewal visits, it is preferable, if possible, to select committee members who have participated in the initial on-site visit.

- 3. Documentation. At least six months prior to an accreditation renewal on-site visit, an accredited school must submit an application for school accreditation renewal. Self-study documentation, in the same format as its original self-study, will be required shortly thereafter, following the guidelines in Appendix F for the Standards (Section 2).
- 4. Fees. For accreditation renewals, the fee is \$4,000, half (\$2,000) to be paid with the renewal application, and the remainder to be paid following the visit. Once paid, fees are **non-refundable**. The fee for school accreditation renewal is separate from the expenses for transportation, room and board, for the accreditation committee on-site visit, which are to be borne by the applying school.
- 5. Process. All of the other timelines and procedures listed above in Section 3 (*Accreditation Procedures*) relating to the initial accreditation process will also apply to accreditation renewal.
- 6. Extensions/probation. If an accredited school is unable to undergo a scheduled renewal visit within a reasonable time frame (no more than a couple of months of its scheduled due date) because of issues at the school, it must notify ACCS in writing and the school will be placed on probation. Possible reasons that might cause an accredited school to delay its accreditation and therefore be placed on probation may include, but are not limited to, the recent loss of the school's head administrator, or the un-replaced loss of an instructor (e.g., the school's Latin teacher). The inability of ACCS to provide a timely visit for any reason will not be held against the school.
- 7. Time Limit. Schools have one additional year to have an on-site accreditation visit. If at the end of the probation period, the school does not undergo an on-site accreditation visit, its accredited status will be dropped (the school's status will be "unaccredited") with no appeal permitted. If the school on probation does have the on-site visit as scheduled at the end of its probationary period, it may have access to an appeal (see Section 3, F. for information on appeals). Subsequent application for accreditation (once the school returns to "unaccredited" status, either following the failure of the school to undergo an on-site visit or "unaccredited" status assigned by the ACCS process) will be considered an initial event. The next step for the school is re-application. At this time, the school's application will start over, returning to an initial accreditation, except that the school's application must be accompanied with a letter documenting the correction of all outstanding discrepancies from the last conducted on-site visit.
- 8. Correction of Discrepancies. Schools placed on Probation Status as a result of an on-site renewal visit, but with discrepancies that may be corrected without a subsequent on-site visit (e.g., failure of an administrative requirement), may have their status upgraded to "accredited" by the ACCS Director of Accreditation provided the school adequately documents in writing that the discrepancies have been corrected. This upgrading will only be permitted if it is assigned as a part of the school's most recent accreditation renewal report approved by the ACCS Board of Directors. Such upgrades are permissible at any time within the two-year window. The correction of discrepancies that require an on-site visit may be done without a full self-study, only requiring documents directly relevant to the discrepancy. Accreditation committees of two are appropriate for such visits.

9. Accreditation Renewal Status. As with accreditation, the ACCS Board will ultimately determine the accreditation renewal status of a school based on the recommendation of the ACCS Accreditation Committee. The accreditation committee will consider the report from the assigned accreditation renewal visit committee and any documentation submitted by the school in response to the committee's report.

I. Accreditation Categories and Determination.

After a school has gone through the accreditation visit, it will be assigned an accreditation status. The three categories of accredited status are listed and explained below.

- Full Accredited Status is granted to those schools which meet both the initial conditions for eligibility
 and the criteria for accreditation as determined by the ACCS Board of Directors.
- 2. Provisionally Accredited Status (Initial Accreditation Only) is an accredited status granted to those schools that have completed their initial self-study and on-site visit but have yet to graduate their first senior class or have discrepancies that must be corrected before they can be granted Accredited Status. Schools assigned Provisionally Accredited Status may be granted up to two years (depending upon the nature and difficulty of the discrepancy) to correct all reported discrepancies before their next on-site visit.
- 3. Preferred Candidacy Status (Initial Accreditation) is the appropriate recommendation if the Visit Committee finds that the school has demonstrated compliance with most (especially pedagogical and cultural), but not all, accreditation standards. The school would provide written documentation of corrections to the director of accreditation and likely have to schedule a follow-up visit to confirm compliance with the standards. Having a three-person committee on the follow-up visit may not be necessary. All corrections must be completed within two years.
- 4. Candidacy Status (Initial Accreditation) is the typical recommendation if there are several major discrepancies or if there are multiple minor discrepancies. The school would remain a candidate for accreditation and be required to write a new self-study and conduct a second on-site visit. The school must complete this process within two years.
- J. Probationary Status. (Renewal Accreditation only) Schools that had been successfully accredited in the past, but on a subsequent accreditation renewal have failed to meet the ACCS accreditation standards, will be placed on probationary status for no more than two years and be provided a specific list of discrepancies. Sometimes the school may be required to correct discrepancies within six months or a year. If after the two-year probationary period the school still fails to meet each of the ACCS accreditation guidelines, the school may have its accreditation status removed by ACCS. Schools that have made clear progress toward correcting all discrepancies may be continued on probation for another two years. Schools that have accreditation removed may reapply for accreditation when they can substantially document that they have corrected all of the outstanding discrepancies. The subsequent accreditation process will be considered as though it was a first-time accreditation which would include all fees, expenses, and documentation. The

above notwithstanding, a school placed on Probationary Status may appeal to the ACCS Director of Accreditation at any time with proof that the issues which resulted in Probationary Status have been corrected.

K. Annual Review for ACCS-Accredited Schools Each ACCS-accredited school must answer these questions on an annual basis during membership renewal:

Review of Accreditation Standards: Has the school designated a member of the school board, staff, or faculty to review the ACCS accreditation standards (Section 2, Standards) within the past year and can that person affirm that the school still conforms to the minimal requirements for ACCS accreditation?

Changes to Key Documents:

- I. Bylaw Review: Has the school made significant changes to its bylaws since the last accreditation visit? If so, please describe those changes.
- 2. Policy Manual Review: Has the school made significant changes to its policy manual since the last visit? If so, please describe those changes.
- 3. Curriculum Guide Review: Has the school made significant changes to its curriculum guide(s) since the last visit? If so, please describe those changes.
- 4. Teacher Certification: As an ACCS-accredited school, you are required to participate in an ACCS teacher certification program. Is the school actively pursuing teacher certification for all full-time (and affected part-time) teachers?

Other Potential Changes: Have any of the following occurred during the covered time period?

- 5. Has there been a change in the head of school?
- 6. Has the school added a grade level to an existing division (i.e., adding grade 8 when grades K–7 are already accredited)?
- 7. Has the school added online, credit recovery courses?
- 8. Any additional information related to the answers above:

Reminder–Substantive Change: Under certain conditions, ACCS-accredited schools are required to send a report within 60 days of any of the following changes in the school. Failure to notify ACCS as required of a substantive change is grounds for the association to issue a letter asking the school to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. Please see the "Substantive Change" section in the Accreditation Handbook for more information.

L. Substantive Change in ACCS-Accredited Schools

Note: New board members added since the last accreditation (or accreditation renewal) and confirmation that they acknowledge agreement with the ACCS Statement of Faith.

The following items constitute a "substantive change" in an accredited school and require the school to inform the director of accreditation:

- Change in the school's legal name or EIN (Employer Identification Number)
- Change in ownership or control
- Change in legal status (e.g., from nonprofit to for-profit, bankruptcy, church-sponsored to independent, etc.) or form of control of the institution
- Change in the school's established mission.
- A material change in the school's financial position that threatens the school's ability to remain a going concern or otherwise threatens the school's ability to support its operations effectively
- Change of location or adding a site that is under the accreditation status
- The merger of two schools, whether only one or both are currently accredited
- Change in grade level configuration. Including the addition of a new school division that is not yet accredited (e.g., high school) or a grade that opens up a new division (e.g., grade 9)
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure in either the content or method of delivery. This program change includes a change in the type of school or in the curricular identity of the school (e.g., International Baccalaureate, Classical, ACE, etc.) or a change or significant addition(s) to program delivery (e.g., percentage of online courses)
- Addition of a degree or diploma-granting program
- Notification of adverse action taken or threatened by a state or other accrediting agency

Schools must notify the Director of Accreditation within 60 days if a substantive change occurs. Substantive change reports should include a brief narrative about the nature of the change, the decision-making process leading to the change (including reference to the strategic plan), any impact on the standards or critical indicators, and the anticipated benefits of the change.

At the discretion of ACCS, schools may be asked to provide additional information. The process will evaluate the school's accredited status and whether or not, given the change, the school will likely continue to meet accreditation standards and whether the school's status should be maintained.

Failure to notify ACCS as required of a substantive change is grounds for the association to issue a letter asking the school to show cause as to why the school's status should not suspended.

The Director of Accreditation will review the change notice and supporting documents. The Director of Accreditation may request additional documentation (for example, financial issues could require completing a financial integrity report) and may also require the school to host a one- or two-day visit by a one- or two-member team.

The evaluation will note any change that negatively impacts meeting a condition of eligibility, an accreditation standard, a critical indicator, or any other change that represents a significant departure in the circumstances from those present during the most recent ACCS accreditation renewal visit.

After gathering the information and evaluating the change, the Director of Accreditation will recommend a status to the the President (or his designee).

Recommendations will state:

- Whether or not the changes are consistent with accreditation standards or not.
- Any components of accreditation renewal that must be submitted earlier.
- Whether the school will maintain its regular timeline for accreditation renewal.

The summary recommendation could be for:

- Continued accreditation on the current schedule
- A shortened time for renewal accreditation
- The suspension of the recognition of accreditation
- The removal of a school's accredited status.

The suspension would state the corrective actions required and a deadline by which the school must implement these changes to align with accreditation standards.

If ACCS takes adverse action, ACCS will notify the school of the specific grounds for such action, including the particular standard(s) that are out of compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted.

DEFINITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION REPORTS

- I. Major Discrepancy. A major discrepancy is defined as *the failure* of a school to meet one of the criteria listed in Section E, Criteria for Accreditation. These discrepancies often *seriously* impair the quality of education.
- 2. **Minor Discrepancy**. A minor discrepancy is defined as the school *not adequately* meeting one of the criteria listed in Section E, Criteria for Accreditation. Should the Accreditation Visit Committee or the ACCS Accreditation Committee determine that the accumulation of minor discrepancies is so numerous that their aggregate seriously impairs the quality of education, the sum total may be designated as a major discrepancy.
- 3. **Recommendations**. These are suggested changes or improvements that all committee members agree on and that are based on experience and directly related to the ACCS Criteria for Accreditation. Individual committee members may make additional suggestions, but they will not be included as a part of the accreditation report.

FINDINGS	DEFINITION	CONSEQUENCE
Major Discrepancy	The failure of a	The school may have no more than two years to correct
	school to meet one	these discrepancies. Corrections may be required through
	of the standards.	documentation or a return visit by one member.
	Seriously impairs the	
	quality of education.	
Minor Discrepancy	Not adequately	Multiple minor discrepancies equate to a major
	meeting one of the	discrepancy.
	standards. Mildly	
	impairs the quality	
	of education.	
No Discrepancies	The school demon-	Status for two years at which time a renewal visit is required
	strates compliance	of all initially accredited schools
	with all standards.	
Recommendations	Offered to help the	No action is mandated, a written comment is required for
	school improve.	each recommendation prior to the next accreditation visit.

Note: These tables serve as a helpful guide to the committees but not in a formulaic sense, i.e.: if there are "x" number of discrepancies, then this must be the recommendation.

SCHOOLS SEEKING INITIAL ACCREDITATION				
OPTIONS FOR THE VISIT COMMITTEE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION FOR DRAFT ACCREDITATION REPORT				
Two-year, accredited status.	Appropriate recommendation if there are no discrepancies			
(Two years is maximum term for initial accreditation.)				
Two-year, provisional accredited status. (Two years is maximum term for initial accreditation.)	Appropriate recommendation if there are only minor discrepancies. In rare cases, if standards in Sections D, E, and F are met, this could be recommended even if there is a major			
	discrepancy. This would also be the recommendation at a K–10 school that still had to graduate its first senior class.			
Preferred candidacy status.	Appropriate recommendation if the school has demonstrated compliance with most, but not all, accreditation standards. The school must correct the discrepancies through either written documentation or may need to host a follow-up visit to confirm compliance with the standards. The school must complete all corrections within two years.			
Candidacy status.	Appropriate recommendation for a school if there are several major discrepancies or multiple minor discrepancies. The school would remain a candidate for accreditation and be required to write a new self-study and conduct a second on-site visit. The school must complete this process within two years.			

ď	
A)	Δ,
☜	~

SCHOOLS SEEKING RENEWAL ACCREDITATION				
CURRENT STATUS:				
FIRST RENEWAL ACCREDITATION				
OR				
SUBSEQUENT RENEWAL ACCREDITATION				
OPTIONS FOR THE VISIT COMMITTEE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION FOR DRAFT ACCREDITATION REPORT				
Five-year, full accredited status	Committee may only recommend this is there are no discrep-			
	ancies in the draft accreditation report			
Probationary accredited Status	The school would have two years to correct all discrepancies			
	in the report. If the discrepancies are corrected within two			
	year, the status would be converted to full accredited status			
	for five years.			
Loss of Accredited Status (Not an option)	In the worst case, a school would move to probationary			
This table is for schools currently under full	status. The next required visit would typically be in two years.			
accredited status.	However, the committee could recommend a shorter time.			

SCHOOLS SEEKING RENEWAL ACCREDITATION			
CURRENT STATUS: SCHOOL HAS PROBATIONARY ACCREDITATION			
OPTIONS FOR THE VISIT COMMITTEE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION FOR DRAFT ACCREDITATION REPORT			
Full Accredited Status	The committee would recommend this if there were no discrepancies. The school would have five years before renewal accreditation was required.		
Probationary Accredited Status	The school would have two years to correct all discrepancies in the report. The school would have to complete the accreditation process again to maintain accredited status.		
Loss of Accredited Status	The committee would recommend this if there were major or multiple minor discrepancies, especially if for the same standards listed in the previous draft accrediation report.		

L. Review and Change Procedures.

 Source. Proposed changes to the ACCS accreditation standards may come from any source within ACCS, including the director of accreditation. Proposed changes should be submitted to the ACCS director of accreditation.

Composition and review. The director of accreditation will:

- I. Draft proposed changes to the accreditation standards. These might also include changes proposed by those at ACCS-accredited schools, as approved by the director of accreditation.
- 2. Share proposed changes with the association president for review and comment. If necessary, the director of accreditation will make revisions to reflect the president's input.
- 3. Convene an ad-hoc committee to review the proposed changes. The committee will consist of three to five members, and will be chaired by the director of accreditation. Members will include those who are qualified to lead visit committees and if needed, at least one member who is a content expert.
- 4. Chair the committee to review, discuss, and perhaps modify the standards. This may initially be done through a shared document for written comments prior to a conference call. Approval of the revised standards will require at least a 2/3 vote of the ad-hoc committee.
- 5. Submit the approved standards to the president for final approval.
- 6. Update the accreditation handbook, including the list of changes in the front, with the revised standards. (The director will also report these changes to VCPE and TEPSAC each year as required.)
- 7. Notify accredited and candidate schools of changes to the standards via email. Changes will also be posted in the MeRC.
- 8. Review. An ACCS Accreditation Committee, appointed by the president, will periodically review the ACCS accreditation standards. The objective of this review will be to make any recommendations to the President that will improve the ACCS accreditation process and procedures. The appointed committee may seek additional input from others not assigned, including, but not limited to, ACCS member schools that have been through the ACCS accreditation process.

Questions for committee consideration:

- I. Are these standards, whether new or revised, consistent with the ACCS mission and vision statements, the ACCS statement of faith, and the definitions of classical and Christian found in the ACCS membership handbook?
- 2. Are these standards consistent with the mission statement for the ACCS school accreditation program?
- 3. Are there any conflicts between other accreditation standards and this proposed change.
- 4. Would these proposed changes improve the quality of education or the overall performance of the school? Would there be any negative impacts?
- 5. Would schools need time to implement these standards?

6. With the addition of these standards, are there other standards that might be eliminated to avoid creating an undue burden on accredited schools?

Review. An ACCS Accreditation Committee, appointed by the president, will periodically review the ACCS accreditation standards. The objective of this review will be to make any recommendations to the ACCS president that will improve the ACCS accreditation process and procedures. The appointed committee may seek additional input from others not assigned, including, but not limited to, ACCS member schools that have been through the ACCS accreditation process

Administrative changes. Administrative changes (spelling, punctuation, formatting) may be made by the director of accreditation without resorting to the above process so long as such emendations do not alter the intent of the current process or procedures.

M. ACCS Grievance Policy:

Grievances Brought Against an ACCS-Member School or an ACCS-Accredited School

1. Overview

- a. This policy establishes procedures for reviewing complaints brought against ACCS-member and ACCS-accredited schools.
- e. ACCS is a small organization. Personnel and financial resources limit ACCS's ability to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of all parties involved.
- e. Grievances against a school must pertain to noncompliance with at least one standard listed in the ACCS Membership Handbook or a standard in the ACCS Accreditation Handbook.
- e. Nothing in this policy will supersede the school's grievance policy as published to relevant parties.
- e. The membership coordinator receives all grievances regarding the policies, procedures, and conduct of ACCS-member schools. The director of accreditation receives all grievances regarding the policies, procedures, and conduct of ACCS-accredited schools.
- e. Throughout this process, ACCS staff are charged with following Proverbs 17:19.
- e. When a grievance raises an issue relating to a member school or an accredited school that fits the criteria described above—noncompliance with ACCS' policies or standards, the membership coordinator or the director of accreditation will follow the following procedures.

2. Procedure for filing a grievance

a. ACCS will acknowledge and review information received alleging noncompliance by a school with ACCS's membership and/or accreditation standards, provided it meets the following criteria. ACCS will give particular consideration to allegations that an accredited school is not in compliance with

ACCS accreditation standards if the alleged violations appear to jeopardize the quality of the institution's education programs.

- e. Grievances must be submitted in writing. ACCS staff will acknowledge receipt of a grievance within ten days of its receipt and will accompany the acknowledgment with a copy of ACCS's grievance review policy. The written compliant must include the following:
 - i. A statement explaining the nature of the school's noncompliance.
 - ii. A reference to the particular standards at issue in the grievance. (ACCS staff will assist in identifying the relevant standard.)
 - iii. The name and contact information of the person bringing the allegation. The statement should also explain the complainant's relationship to the school.
 - iv. An explanation of steps that the complainant has already taken to resolve the issue directly with the school. ACCS serves as a court of appeals. It is required that complainants have followed all steps provided in the school's own grievance policy.
 - v. An explanation of exactly what action the complainant is seeking from the school.
- e. ACCS staff will review the written statement to make a determination of whether or not the submitted statement satisfies these five criteria. If the criteria are met, an investigation will be conducted. If the statement fails to meet these criteria, the complaint will be dismissed.
- 3. Investigation of a grievance against an institution (possible outcomes for noncompliance)

Should ACCS determine that all these criteria listed above have been met, the investigation will proceed in the following manner:

- a. ACCS staff will ask the school to provide a detailed response, with such supporting material as the institution determines is relevant, within a specified deadline (typically, not less than two weeks).
- e. After a review of documentation from the initial request, ACCS staff may seek additional information from either the school or the complainant.
- e. ACCS staff will prepare a summary statement, listing facts to which each party agrees and a second set of facts which are in dispute.
- e. ACCS staff will present this summary to an ad-hoc committee of at least three people. Committee members may include other ACCS staff members or administrators from ACCS-accredited schools.
- e. The ad-hoc committee may decide to ask ACCS staff to investigate further, including seeking information from other parties with first-hand knowledge of the issues, or may make a determination from the initial report. ACCS lacks the resources to complete an on-site investigation; however, if needed, interviews may be conducted virtually.
- e. The ad-hoc committee will make a recommendation to the ACCS president (or designee) for a final decision.

- e. Once the ACCS president (or designee) approves the recommendation, the school and the complainant will be notified.
- e. ACCS may request that member schools make changes as a condition of continued membership. Accredited schools may receive recommendations, or discrepancies that would need to be corrected within a specified time period.
- 4. Ordinary Complaint Timetable for a Complaint Against an Institution
 - a. Day 1: ACCS receives a formal complaint.
 - e. Day 30: ACCS staff determines whether or not a complaint should proceed. The staff will notify both the subject institution and the complainant of such action.
 - e. Day 45: ACCS has requested and received a response from the institution.
 - e. Day 75: The ad-hoc committee makes a determination that the complaint is without merit, has been resolved, or the complaint warrants further investigation. This may require requests for additional information from the institution or other sources. As promptly as is reasonable thereafter, the adhoc committee will conclude its consideration of the complaint and make a recommendation to the ACCS president (or designee).
 - e. By Day 120: Following approval from the ACCS president (or designee), ACCS will take final action in the form of a report to the those involved.
 - e. ACCS will use its best efforts to meet this timetable, but ACCS may extend or otherwise alter this timetable as circumstances require to reach a correct decision.

5. Other important considerations

- a. Grievances found to have merit shall become part of the institution's accreditation file.
- e. Grievances dismissed as lacking merit shall not be part of the institution's accreditation file.
- e. Member schools may appeal adverse decisions to the ACCS Board of Directors.

APPENDIX A: TYPES OF ACCS ACCREDITATION

The majority of ACCS-accredited schools are accredited under our standard accreditation, which requires a school to operate a conventional number of hours and serve grades K–12 (or K–10, see conditions). Standard Accreditation ("Accreditation" herein, unless otherwise noted): K–12 schools that may grant ACCS-authorized, high-school diplomas. 7–12 programs may request a waiver to exclude K–6 under some circumstances. For schools that do not meet the requirements for Standard Accreditation, we have endorsements that communicate to parents and interested parties the relevant limitations or extensions of the modified accreditation.

Grade configurations included under standard accreditation:

- K–12. Schools are eligible to begin the accreditation process with grades K–10 in place. The school would become "accredited" as a K–12 school, upon the graduation of their first senior class.
- 7–12. Under some circumstances, schools are eligible to seek standard accreditation. Applicants should explain how receive a classical, Christian education in grades K–6. Applications from schools with grades 9–12 will be considered but applicants will need to demonstrate how students are taught logic and Latin or Greek. Schools should explain how K–6 classical Christian education is being conducted in the community and how the school is assessing this understanding.

Multisite schools: Schools that hold classes for grades K–12 in more than one facility must address additional standards.

Multi-model: Systems where school boards operate multiple educational models—conventional, collaborative, special education, sex-segregated, special focus (outdoor), etc.

ACCS ACCREDITATION ENDORSEMENTS

Our endorsement program allows for a variety of types of accreditation available through the ACCS. Schools that want to combine endorsements must request specific approval.

ENDORSEMENTS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE: SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION (SEE P. III)

Collaborative (previously "Shared Instruction") Endorsement. Schools are authorized to award diplomas and will be listed as "ACCS-accredited with a "collaborative" endorsement. This form of accreditation is granted to schools that operate with non-traditional schedules or hours to share responsibility for education more heavily with parents. These schools, if they offer a full K–12 program, may grant ACCS authorized high-school diplomas. Schools have the option to issue authorized diplomas with this statement: "Diploma authorized by the Association of Classical & Christian Schools."

Additional Standards for Collaborative Model

These are additional standards that schools using a collaborative model must address, in addition to the rest of the accreditation standards for all schools.

1. Collaborative

Definition: Collaborative (formerly "Shared Instruction" endorsement, also includes University Model schools) (accredited as "collaborative"): Schools that operate with non-traditional schedules or hours to share responsibility for education more heavily with parents. These schools, if they offer K–12 programs, may grant ACCS-authorized high-school diplomas. Schools have the option to issue authorized diplomas with this statement: "Diploma authorized by the Association of Classical Christian Schools."

Eligibility:

- I. Schools must be diploma-granting institutions (or certificate-awarding institution if a K-6 or K-8 program). This endorsement is for institutions that specify a program of courses that qualifies students to receive a diploma (or certificate). ACCS does not accredit homeschool programs or "co-ops."
- 2. Grammar school (i.e., grades 1-6) students spend on average at least 14 hours per week on-campus. Logic (i.e., grades 7-8), and rhetoric (i.e., grades 9-12) students spend on average at least 21 hours per week on-campus. (ACCS will consider appeals from schools that have at least 17 hours per week.) Note: Schools receiving ACCS-accreditation prior to May, 2020, with two-day per week programs are exempt from this requirement.

Philosophy: ACCS values the creation of a learning community, particularly in the upper school where discussion, logical thinking, and rhetoric are frequently practiced. We also recognize that students typically need more teacher assistance given the challenge of academic subjects in the upper school.

- **C.1. Diploma Track**: The school must specify a list of courses and credits required for students in each grade. Successful completion of these requirements culminates in the awarding of a diploma (or certificate) at the end of the 12th grade (or 6th or 8th grade). The required course of study must be well organized and publicized to parents and students in a clear and specific manner.
 - a. Principle: A required course of study leading to a diploma is a distinguishing characteristic of schools.
 - e. Indicators: For each grade, the school has a list of required courses for full-time students that address the specific subject areas listed in E. Academics.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - A list of the required courses by grade that includes course titles, course credits, and course descriptions.
 - ii. Published information about the required courses that schools provide to parents and students.

Note: Diplomas (and diploma-tracks) are for full-time students. Collaborative schools often have students taking courses a la carte who would not receive a diploma.

- **C.2. Time in Class and Home**: The school provides sufficient hours of instruction for all students. Schools ensure that students use time off-campus for study and learning.
 - a. Principle: Believing that time is related to learning, schools require students to spend sufficient time each week in study.
 - e. Indicators: The school has a weekly schedule identifying days when students are required to attend class on-campus. Schools also have clear expectations for additional days and times for learning when students are off-campus. Schools have developed methods to ensure students are accountable for study when off-campus.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Class schedules along with written explanations to help the reviewer understand the specific amount of time students meet for classes on campus.
 - ii. Lesson plans for each grade level for one week, along with directions to parents and/or students for work required for off-campus days.
 - iii. Instructions to parents and sample documents (e.g., student's work, written papers, tests, and quizzes, etc.) used by the school to ensure that students spend time learning while off-campus.
- **C.3. Assessment**: Regardless of the particular form used, schools must have a plan for assessing student learning.
 - a. Principle: Students must receive regular assessments so that teachers, students, and parents may know how well students have learned the course material.
 - e. Indicators: Schools have identified specific school-wide practices for conducting regular assessments that ensure reliable and authentic measures of student learning. If not under the supervision of teachers, schools have developed mandatory procedures that ensure that student learning is being accurately assessed.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Administrative guidelines (or policies) provided to teachers on how to conduct student assessments, including when to test in class and when to test at home.
 - ii. Written guidelines for parents and students that explain required testing procedures.
- **C.4. Parent Training**: Collaborative schools should expect and require the participation of parents to ensure quality learning occurs when students are not on-campus.

- a. Principle: Schools provide guidance and direction to ensure students learn specific content that follows the school's mission and philosophy of education. Students require accountability to ensure the best use of their time.
- e. Indicators: Admission policies communicate specific expectations to parents for their involvement in student learning.
- e. Schools provide formal training for parents, often referred to as "co-teachers."
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Admission materials that explain the parent's responsibility for student learning.
 - ii. A schedule of dates and times and a description of the training that the school provides to parents.
 - iii. Teacher created or other curriculum materials used for training parents to teach specific subjects.
 - iv. Examples of times when the school has disenrolled or not re-enrolled students due to lack of cooperation from parents.

Notes:

Retention of Faculty: The ACCS Accreditation Handbook includes standard B.6. Enrollment and Employment Stability. One of the indicators for this standard is the teacher retention rate for the past five years. Visit committees should be sure to review the retention rate at collaborative model schools.

Teacher Training: The ACCS Accreditation Handbook also includes standard F.4. Teacher Development. Visit committees should also be sure to review how often the school schedules teacher training meetings. Given the number of part-time teachers plus higher teacher turnover, there must be regular training conducted throughout the school year.

Administrative Staff: The ACCS Accreditation Handbook includes a section on F. Faculty and Instructional Resources which states that the school must have sufficient faculty, instructional, and facility resources to achieve its mission. Given that teachers are only on campus for two or three days per week, collaborative model schools must have sufficient administrators to allow for regular classroom supervision.

Addendum for TEXAS: TEPSAC is discussing waivers and directions to associations who accredit collaborative model schools. This information will be updated once new guidelines are available.

Visit Schedule: As parents are typically considered "co-teachers," the visit schedule will include a time for three parents to meet with the visit committee.

Multisite Schools: Schools that want to have multiple sites included on a single accreditation visit must meet the following criteria. There are additional standards that schools with multi-sites must address, in addition to the rest of the accreditation standards for all schools. The visit committee will write one report following the visit.

Philosophy: To ensure a focus on instruction during site visits, ACCS has always invested significant time in classroom observations. The multisite process is intended to facilitate communication and simplify preparation for accreditation. As always, ACCS wants to maintain the same quality when accrediting multisite schools by spending time visiting each campus.

Definition of Multisite: Multiple (two or more) campus locations with the same grades operating under a single governing authority. Multisite visits may be accommodated for different school models (conventional, collaborative, special needs, etc.).

Evaluation Questions:

- Does the organization have more than one building with different addresses that house the same grade level? (For example, second-grade classrooms at facility one and other second-grade classrooms at facility two.)
- 2. Does the organization have a single board that oversees each facility?
- 3. Does the organization have a single employee reporting to the board with authority over each facility?
- 4. Are the facilities located in an area that would allow visit committee members to travel from a central location, spend a full day at each facility, and return to a central location at the end of the day?

Notes:

- 1. Schools with multiple facilities serving a single succession of grades are not multisite schools. (For example, grades K–6 in one location and grades 7–12 in another location.)
- 2. Online schools or homeschools are not multisite schools.
- 3. "Franchise" schools that have multiple locations outside of a single metro are not eligible for a multisite visit. These models would be visited as individual schools. Some shared documentation in the self study will be permitted IF the schools are ready for visits at the same time.

Ability to Conduct the Site Visit:

School facilities must be located in the same general vicinity, such that one visit committee could visit different sites on consecutive days during the same visit. The visiting team must see all campuses during the visit and be able to gather each night for discussion to assess consistency between sites. Sometimes, visits may need to be extended. For this reason, when school systems of more than three schools apply, they may require larger teams to allow each team member to visit at least three sites. The number of people on the visit committee will allow for each visitor to visit three different sites. The total time required may not exceed five days (allowing two days for travel).

Costs:

The typical accreditation fee provides for a team of three individuals. (Four total days are required, two travel days and two visit days.) The size of the committee will be determined by the director of accreditation in consultation with the head of school. If the visit committee must be larger than normal (i.e., three people) for these visits, there will be additional expenses for additional members. (Travel and housing expenses will also be paid by the school as usual.)

If a longer visit is required to see additional sites, an additional \$2,000 will be assessed for each additional campus.

Additional Standards for Multisite Schools:

- **MSI.** Rationale. The school should inform the committee why they have decided to establish different school sites rather than one location.
 - a. Principle: When assessing the effectiveness of a school, it is helpful to understand the founding vision and history of a school or a school system.
 - e. Indicators: In addition to a historical summary, the school should have founding principles in bylaws or other documents.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - i. School bylaws (or other documents) with references to pertinent sections.
 - ii. Written history included in promotional materials.
 - iii. Any philosophy statements that address founding principles.
- **MS2.** Administrative Resources: The school must have sufficient administrative resources to achieve its mission. The school must demonstrate that each campus administrator meets the school's written requirements for the position(s) that they hold.
 - a. Definitions: Chief administrator—the board's sole employee. Campus administrator—a person responsible for the administration of a specific campus, who may or may not be located on that campus and may or may not be full-time. Typically, this person would report to the board's main employee.
 - e. Principle: Campus administrators are only able to be in one campus location at a time. The greater the number of campus locations, the greater the need to employ qualified, capable campus administrators.
 - e. Indicators: The presence of a campus administrator who can train, observe, and guide teachers is directly related to the quality of classroom instruction and the culture of the school. Campus administrators should have sufficient authority to assist teachers in working with parents, have input into teacher retention, address school safety and matters of emergencies.
 - e. Documentation:
 - i. List the number of separate classroom buildings and the distance between them.

- ii. Explain the hours when a school administrator is on campus and identify the hours when a school site lacks a campus administrator.
- iii. Provide job descriptions for the chief administrator and campus administrator.
- MS3. Constancy of Mission. The school entity has in place a means of communication and a process for accountability to ensure a unity of purpose and consistent focus on the mission and/or vision at all locations.
 - a. Principle: Parents and students expect to receive consistency in school programs. Ensuring a purpose-ful plan for implementing the school's mission is a key to ensure this occurs.
 - e. Indicators: Schools have a regular means for sharing common communication from the central office. Schools also have a means for assessing implementation of the mission at each location.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Description of the function of the central administrative office. Examples of central office communications.
 - ii. Description and examples of reports from campus administrators to the main office.
 - iii. Describe how often regular meetings of all school administrators are conducted and common topics for those meetings.
- **MS4.** Consistent Instruction and Learning. What steps does the school take to ensure consistent instruction and student learning across the schools?
 - a. Principle: Parents and students expect to receive consistency in academic programs across all campuses. The quality of instruction provided at each site should be similar. Ensuring consistency in student learning is important for the reputation and success of the school. A student should be able to transfer from one site to another without finding significant academic differences.
 - e. Indicators: Campus administrators should not be treated as independent operators. There must be a clear communication of expectations for curriculum and instruction guiding their work.
 - e. Documentation should include:
 - Directions given to campus administrators regarding areas of student discipline, curriculum and implementation, and pedagogy.
 - ii. Means of monitoring work at individual campuses to ensure consistent learning at each site.
 - iii. Methods of assessment used by the school entity to determine whether the student experience at each site is consistent with the school's mission and vision.

For these accreditation standards required from all schools, multisite schools must provide information for each specific site.

The self-study for these standards should provide campus-specific information.

- **F.4. Teacher Development**: The school must have an established, ongoing teacher development program, consistent with the ACCS vision. This should include taking advantage of ACCS-approved conferences, training, audio/video recordings, or other materials.
- **F.5. Classroom Observation**: The school shall have written procedures that describe regular and ongoing supervision and classroom observation of all teachers. Policies should require written year-end evaluations for every teacher.

Multi-model Schools: Schools with multiple models that they want to have included on a single accreditation visit must meet the following criteria. ACCS desires to accommodate multi-model schools with a single self-study and a coordinated site visit. These are additional standards that schools with multiple models must address, in addition to the rest of the accreditation standards for all schools. The visit committee will write one report for the organization. However, an additional section will provide a general summary of each school.

Philosophy: To ensure a focus on instruction during on-site visits, ACCS has always invested significant time in classroom observations. The multi-model process is intended to facilitate communication and simplify preparation for accreditation. At the same time, ACCS wants to maintain the same quality in assessing multi-model schools by spending time visiting each school.

Definition of Multi-model: Systems where school boards operate multiple educational models—conventional, collaborative, special education, sex-segregated, special focus (outdoor), etc.

Evaluation Questions:

- I. Does one school board oversee two separate schools? (For example, a conventional five-day per week school and a second collaborative model school.)
- 2. Does each school have distinct admission requirements?
- 3. Does each school have distinct courses of study and curriculum guides?
- 4. Does each school have distinct graduation requirements for earning a diploma?

Notes:

- I. These schools may or may not share a facility.
- 2. Students may or may not be able to transfer from one school to the other.

Ability to Conduct the Site Visit:

School facilities must be located in the same general vicinity, such that one visit committee could visit different sites on consecutive days during the same visit. For this reason, when school networks of more than three schools apply, they will require larger teams to allow each team member to visit at least three sites. The total time required for a visit does not exceed five days (allowing two days for travel).

Costs:

The typical accreditation fee provides for a team of three individuals who visit one school site. Four days are normally required, two travel days and two visit days. If a longer visit is required to see additional sites, an additional \$1,000 total will be assessed per each additional campus.

Additional Standards for Multi-model Schools:

MM1. Rationale. The school should inform the committee why it has decided to develop separate schools.

- a. Principle: When assessing the effectiveness of a school, it is helpful to understand the founding vision and history of a school or a school system.
- e. Indicators: In addition to a historical summary, the school may include founding principles in school bylaws.
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. School bylaws with references to pertinent sections
 - ii. Written history included in promotional materials
 - iii. Any philosophy statements that address founding principles
- **MM2.** Administrative Resources: The school must have sufficient administrative resources to achieve its mission. The school must demonstrate that each campus administrator meets the school's written requirements for the position(s) that they hold.
 - a. Definitions: Campus administrator—a single person responsible for the administration of a specific campus, who may or may not be located on that campus and may or may not be full-time. This person would typically report to the board's single employee.
 - e. Principle: Chief administrators are only able to be in one campus location at a time. The greater the number of campus locations, the greater the need to employ qualified, capable campus administrators. A school must have written requirements for hiring administrators which include either a specific job description or general standards of conduct, knowledge and ability consistent with the authority which the person has been hired to act on.
 - e. Indicators: The presence of a campus administrator who can train, observe, and guide teachers is directly related to the quality of classroom instruction and the culture of the school. Campus administrators should have the authority to address matters of emergencies, school safety, teacher retention, and be able to support teachers when necessary, in working with parents.
 - e. The campus administrator should report to the board's single employee.
 - e. Documentation:
 - i. List the number of separate classroom buildings and the distance between them.
 - ii. Explain the hours when a school administrator is on campus and identify the hours when a school site lacks a building administrator.
 - iii. Provide job descriptions for these positions.
- MM3. Constancy of Mission. The school entity has in place a means of communication and a process for accountability to ensure a unity of purpose and consistent focus on the mission and vision at all locations.

- a. Principle: Parents and students expect to receive consistency between school programs across all campuses. Ensuring a common vision for implementing the school's mission is key to ensure that this occurs.
- e. Indicators: Schools have a regular means for sharing common communication from the central office. Schools also have a means for assessing the implementation of the mission statement at each location.
- e. Documentation should include:
 - i. Description of the function of the central administrative office. Examples of central office communications.
 - ii. Description and examples of reports from campus administrators to the main office.
 - iii. Describe how often regular meetings of all school administrators are conducted and common topics for those meetings.

For these accreditation standards required from all schools, multisite schools must provide information for each specific site.

The self-study for these standards should provide school-specific information.

- **F.4. Teacher Development**: The school must have an established, ongoing teacher development program, which is consistent with the ACCS vision, and should include taking advantage of ACCS-approved conferences, training, audio/video recordings, and/or materials.
- **F.5. Classroom Observation**: The school shall have written procedures that describe regular and ongoing supervision and classroom observation of all teachers. Policies should require written year-end evaluations for every teacher.



ENDORSEMENTS APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT: SUBMIT A LETTER

Approved for development: Submit a letter to the director of accreditation expressing interest in helping develop these endorsements. We are seeking trial schools to assist with standard development for this endorsement. We will initially work on those endorsements that represent large numbers of ACCS member schools. Visit committees will use a draft set of revised standards during their site visit. Recommendations for changes to the draft standards, from the school and visit committee, will be provided to the ad-hoc committee following the site visit.

Initial accreditation for these endorsements may involve one or two visits, depending on the school's readiness. All schools undergoing accreditation for the first time may earn, at most, provisional accredited status, for a maximum of two years, at which time another accreditation application and fee, self-study, and site visit are required. This helps to ensure that new schools are carefully brought into our system, and that some of the requirements, like teacher certification, are functioning. Some schools may earn provisional accredited status after the first visit while other schools may require a second visit to achieve provisional status.

Limited Grade-Level Endorsement: Schools will be listed as "ACCS-accredited with a "limited grade-level endorsement" but are not authorized to issue diplomas or certificates (ACCS endorsesd or otherwise). This endorsement allows schools to become ACCS accredited without a full K-12 program.

Examples include:

- Schools that serve grades K–6 (no diploma authorization)
- Schools that serve grades K–8 (no diploma authorization)

The letter should identify other options for classical Christian education in your local area. Schools that grow to a K-12 structure MUST reapply for K-12 accreditation.

Limited Student-Service Endorsement Schools will be listed as "ACCS-accredited with a "limited student-service endorsement" but are not authorized to issue diplomas or certificates (ACCS endorsesd or otherwise). This is given to schools that serve a specific sub-population of students, for example, learning disabled, physically disabled, missionary kids, etc. This category does not apply to schools with selective application policies that are within the spectrum of "normal."

Online School Endorsement: Schools will be listed as "ACCS-accredited with an "online school endorsement. School may award diplomas IF the school ensures that graduation requirements are met from the state students reside in. (If the school has students from Students from Georgia, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia, they must ensure that graduation requirements for these states are met.) Along with the letter of interest to the director of accreditation, complete the application for school accreditation. (Do not include the accreditation fee.) The letter and application will be sent to the ACCS Board of Directors for review and further action.

ACCREDITATION TYPES NOT AVAILABLE FROM THE ACCS

Daycare Certification: ACCS does not certify the daycare operations of member schools undergoing ACCS accreditation.

Regional Reciprocity or Direct State Recognition: Except where required by law (e.g., Tennessee), we do not offer reciprocity directly with the state, federal, or regional accreditation authorities. We do, however, accept private accreditation recognition from states that offer this service under terms that protect the independence of our schools. The ACCS school accreditation program is currently recognized by Texas, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Georgia through their private councils..

APPENDIX B: FINANCIAL INTEGRITY REQUIREMENTS

In having an independent accountant or bookkeeper respond to the questions in this document, the school will be fulfilling the requirement of Section 2, B.4 of the ACCS Accreditation Program. ACCS neither requires nor desires an audit.

These requirements have two purposes: first and foremost, to assist schools in their stewardship; and second, to avoid association with financial mismanagement. These requirements serve as guides to building financial integrity into a school's operations. Since schools accredited by ACCS are held up as examples for other schools to emulate, it is important that a school seeking ACCS accreditation have sound financial policies established and in practice.

For ACCS accreditation, a member school must have an independent financial agent/agency review and evaluate the school in each of the following six areas. A written letter from the financial institution must be included in the school's documentation package addressing each item below and briefly describing the school's implementation of each of these requirements.

- I. Internal Controls
- II. Planning
- III. Financial Policies
- IV. Accounting Records
- V. Communication
- VI. Oversight

The following paragraphs amplify the six requirements listed above, and provide specific questions that must be addressed in the letter from the independent financial institution.

I. An accredited school must adhere to effective internal controls.

Internal controls govern the way things are done at a school, things pertaining to the school's resources. They are, therefore, embodied in policies and procedures, which in turn have been designed to safeguard assets by reducing the opportunities for misappropriation or fraud. ACCS requires accredited schools to both have and adhere to effective internal controls. Furthermore, these internal controls must be embodied in written policies and procedural guidelines.

- A. Does the school have clearly defined, written policies/procedural guidelines specifically on internal controls?
- B. Do these written policies/procedural guidelines, if properly followed, reduce the opportunities for misappropriation? If not, what needs to be changed to make them so?

II. An accredited school must plan.

A budget expresses in writing the anticipated costs of operating and how those costs will be met. The budgeting process requires schools to think ahead, *i.e.*, plan. This process is based on the principle of counting the cost. It repudiates and helps prevent the sin of being anxious about tomorrow. ACCS requires schools seeking accreditation to develop written budgets for the upcoming year and encourages them to plan even further ahead, in all instances committing their way to God.

- A. Does the school have a written and board-approved budget for the current year?
- B. Does the budget show an operating deficit at the end of the fiscal year?
- C. Does the school demonstrate in its operations that it is conforming to its budget on a monthly basis?

III. An accredited school must adhere to sound financial policies.

Financial policies overlap with internal controls, but are broader in scope. They embody the principles of wise financial conduct. They promote efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. They protect integrity. ACCS requires schools seeking accreditation to both have and adhere to sound, written financial policies.

- A. Does the school have board-approved written financial policies?
- B. Do these policies provide guidance to the board, administrator, and staff in how finances are to be managed by the school? If not, what is needed to correct any deficiencies?

IV. An accredited school must maintain appropriate accounting records.

Accounting records are appropriate when they are suitable, contemporaneous, and accurate: suitable because they conform to the common principles of accounting, contemporaneous because they are kept up to date, and accurate because their contents are correctly recorded. They are the historical record of the school's financial dealings and provide experience to the planning process. ACCS requires schools seeking accreditation to maintain suitable, contemporaneous, and accurate accounting records.

- A. Does the school have an accountant?
- B. Is the accountant familiar with common principles of accounting?
- C. Are the accounting records up to date?
- D. Do the contents appear to be correctly recorded?
- E. Does the school maintain past files of their accounting records? How far back?

V. An accredited school must communicate aptly in financial matters.

Schools have financial dealings with customers, suppliers, benefactors, regulatory bodies and staff, among others. Needful information is sometimes historical, as in a report, and sometimes prospective, as in a tuition or salary agreement. Aptness means suited to the purpose. The ultimate purpose being the honoring of the Lord Jesus Christ, communication must be above reproach. It must seek to avoid misunderstanding and

misconceptions. ACCS requires schools seeking accreditation to publish, report, or otherwise disseminate information aptly.

- A. Does the school make monthly or quarterly financial reports to the school board?
- B. Does the school make an annual financial report to the school's constituency?
- C. Are these reports formatted in such a way as to make them understandable and usable?

VI. An accredited school must be overseen financially.

One of the primary safeguards of any enterprise is active oversight by those ultimately responsible. Without attentive involvement, accountability suffers. Internal controls may be sidestepped. Planning may be foregone. Sound financial policies may go unheeded. ACCS requires schools seeking accreditation to be overseen financially by their governing bodies.

- A. Does the school's bylaws or policy manual have provision for the school board to oversee the school's financial operations?
- B. Do these guidelines provide adequate checks to ensure the board that the school is complying with all of the required financial guidelines and internal controls? If not, what needs to be changed to make them so?

Evaluation

In approving a school for accreditation, ACCS will evaluate the member school's performance in the above six areas, giving appropriate weight to the evaluation letter submitted by the independent financial agency. It will also give consideration to the school's past financial dealings and current financial state.

Deficiencies

Deficiencies will be deemed either terminal or curable. **Terminal deficiencies will bar accreditation by ACCS**. Curable deficiencies will result in a probationary accreditation by ACCS. The terms of the probationary period will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Probation is intended to allow the benefits of accreditation while a school is making demonstrable progress towards meeting the financial integrity requirements, pursuant to its plan of corrective action.

Plans of corrective action

Developing a plan of corrective action is the responsibility of the applicant school, as is the implementation of the plan. Each plan must outline the specific steps that will be taken to correct deficiencies, together with a proposed timeline.

APPENDIX C: ACCREDITATION TIME LINE

Note: The days indicated below on the time line may be reduced, but should not be extended without prior mutual concurrence between ACCS and the school.

Day

- o School submits accreditation/renewal application (fees non-refundable)
- 7 Accreditation/renewal application received at ACCS
- 8 Application reviewed and approved, school notified of their approval as a Candidate for Accreditation

Note: The school has up to one year from the date of notification to submit their documentation package to ACCS for preliminary review (failure to make the one-year deadline will terminate the school's approval as a Candidate, and the process must be re-initiated)

- X School's documentation package received at ACCS
- X+7 The ACCS Director of Accreditation reviews the documentation package for completeness. Additions/corrections are requested from the applying school. If there are no corrections, the school is directed to send copies of the package to the assigned accreditation committee members. (Note: There may be some additional short delay at this point if ACCS determines that the package is incomplete and additional items are required. However, all required items must be submitted no later than one year from the date of the letter of notification of being approved as a Candidate for Accreditation. For this reason, it would behoove a school to submit its documentation package to ACCS for review as soon as possible.)
- X+37 (Note: This approximates 30 days after the committee members have received their copy of the documentation package.) The accreditation committee completes its review and makes their recommendation to the ACCS Director of Accreditation as to whether a visit is warranted or not, and any reasons for a negative recommendation. If the recommendation is affirmative, the visit date is confirmed with the school and the accreditation committee.
- X+45 Committee members purchase their own airline tickets, and send a copy of the receipt to ACCS for reimbursement. ACCS will consolidate all expenses for the visit and bill the school separately after the visit.

The school must then:

- Arrange for three single hotel rooms for the committee during the visit
- Arrange for box lunches for committee members for the days they are at the school
- Coordinate with the ACCS Director of Accreditation for the final visit schedule (see Visit Committee Handbook)

ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS \clubsuit ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

- X+90 The accreditation committee arrives
- X+91 The on-site visit begins
- X+92 The on-site visit completes. The committee determines its recommendation for the ACCS Accreditation Committee, and develops its basic comments for the final report.
- X+93 The committee reports its recommendation on accreditation to the school's administrator, and provides any supporting comments. It must be noted that the wording of the final report may be more comprehensive than the initial comments made to the school administrator.
- X+114 The committee completes its written report and sends it to the director of accreditation for review.
- X+123 A copy of the written report is sent to the school. The school may submit to ACCS a written response within 30 days that will be attached to the report.
- X+153 The director of accreditation sends a copy of the report (and the school's written response, if submitted) to the ACCS President (or designee) and the visit committee chairman (or senior member). (This is the ad-hoc committee for this visit.)
- X+243 The ad-hoc committee will review the recommendation from the director of accreditation, the written report from the visit committee, and any written response from the school, and make the final determination on accreditation within 30 days of the receipt of the draft accreditation report.
- X+244 The director of accreditation will report the committee's decision to the school and any germane comments.

APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR REGIONAL ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

These are additional standards that schools in these states must address, in addition to ACCS standards.

1. GEORGIA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION ADDENDUM (GAPSAC)

ACCS Board Approval: January 23, 2015

Guidelines: The following criteria are to be used as minimum acceptable requirements to approve an ACCS school for accreditation under this Georgia Addendum in addition to the requirements of Policy 5.3.1, the ACCS Accreditation Policy (i.e., ACCS Accreditation Handbook).

When Georgia schools apply for ACCS accreditation, they must ensure the following GAPSAC requirements are met, and these will be verified in the self-study and by the ACCS visit committee during the on-site visit.

GAPSAC Requirements and References (in addition to the ACCS Accreditation Standards):

- A. Under paragraph B. j. Library/Media Center: "In clear realization of the increasing need of students to have computer skills in acquiring information, the school should implement and follow a plan to provide computers sufficient in number to give students instruction in accessing the Internet." (GAPSAC standards, p. 23, item j.6)
- B. Under paragraph B. j. Library/Media Center: "Internet use and access should be governed by the school in accord with the school's philosophy and objectives." (GAPSAC standards, p. 23, item j.7)
- C. Under paragraph B. j. Library/Media Center: "Each school shall spend a minimum of \$30 per student or \$500 per year on library/media center materials (whichever is less). (GAPSAC standards, p. 24, item j.8)
- D. Under paragraph B. o.: Required Standardized Testing: "Reports of this testing shall be included in the annual report to the accrediting organization to which the school belongs." (GAPSAC standards, p. 26, item 0.3)
- E. Each school shall comply with minimum kindergarten age policy.

2. IOWA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION ADDENDUM

Iowa Department of Education Approval: April 1, 2024

The independent accreditation process in Iowa is based on Iowa Code 256.11 subsection 16.

Guidelines: Iowa Code 256.11 subsection 16 means the Iowa Department of Education relies on the independent accrediting agency to determine for the following:

- Identify new schools participating in the independent accrediting agency's accreditation process.
- Each accrediting agency determines the extent of meaningful participation required for a school to be recognized as independently accredited. The DOE must defer to the accrediting agency which makes this decision.
- Identify when a school becomes fully accredited by an independent accrediting agency.
- Verify that the independent accrediting agency continues to accredit the school annually.
- Inform the Department when a school's accreditation status changes, whether the change was voluntary or involuntary, to accredited, not accredited, or any measure of provisional accreditation.

Schools must:

- Register via the edportal on the Department of Education's website.
- Complete annual assurances to comply with statutory health and safety requirements for school facilities.
- Maintain a brick-and-mortar space for face-to-face instruction.
- Meet accreditation criteria as determined by the independent accrediting agency.

3. TENNESSEE SCHOOL ACCREDITATION ADDENDUM

August 2023 Revised

Guidelines: The following criteria are to be used as minimum acceptable requirements to approve an ACCS school for accreditation under this Tennessee Addendum in addition to the requirements of Policy 5.3.1, the ACCS Accreditation Policy (i.e., ACCS Accreditation Handbook).

0520-07-02-.03 CATEGORY II: AGENCY ACCREDITATION.

Criteria for Approval of a Category II Private School Accrediting Agency.

A. Agency Responsibilities. The agency shall

- Maintain written descriptions of the requirements for school accreditation and of the levels or types of membership granted;
- 2. Re-evaluate approved schools annually;
- 3. Give advance publication of proposed changes in accreditation standards to schools. These changes must be approved in advance by the Department;
- 4. Advise schools or directly provide them with technical assistance to address deficiencies in meeting the accreditation standards of the agency;
- 5. Notify the Department within ten (10) business days of adding or removing an accredited school from its list;
- 6. Require schools to report to the accrediting agency on deficiencies that could affect accredited status;
- 7. Have procedures for revocation of accreditation for any school that does not comply with the agency's standards for approved schools. Such procedures shall include how the agency monitors approved schools for compliance with agency standards, including working with schools to remedy areas of non-compliance that are identified by the Department; and
- 8. Publish and follow minimum standards for approved schools, including, at a minimum:
 - a. Attendance.
 - i. Each school shall comply with the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-6-3007 regarding the reporting of the names, ages, and addresses of all pupils in attendance to the director of schools for the public school district in which the student resides.
 - ii. Each school shall ensure students entering Kindergarten have reached five (5) years of age on or before August 15 pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-201(b)(3), unless the principal or head of school finds through evaluation and testing, at the request of the parent or legal guardian, that a child who is five (5) on or before September 30 is sufficiently mature emotionally and academically to enter Kindergarten and the school has a policy permitting testing by the principal or head of school to obtain early admission to Kindergarten.

e. Facilities, Health, and Safety.

- i. Each school shall comply with all laws, rules and regulations, and codes of the city, county, and state regarding planning of new buildings, alterations and health and safety.
- ii. Each school shall observe all fire safety regulations and procedures promulgated by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office.
- iii. Each school shall conduct at least one (1) fire safety inspection annually based on the fire safety inspection checklist developed by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office, and maintain copies of the inspection reports, including findings of non-compliance and actions taken to comply for review by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office.
- iv. Each school shall construct, remodel, renovate, expand, or modify school buildings or other structures in accordance with any state and/or federal requirements applicable to the school regarding building accessibility, which may include, but is not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- v. Each principal or head of school shall comply with the requirement of Department of Health Rules and T.C.A. § 49-6-5001 that each child enrolled in school be vaccinated against disease, subject to any applicable exemptions set forth in State law or Department of Health Rules.
- vi. Each school shall conduct a criminal history records check prior to employment for any person applying for or holding a position as a teacher or any other position requiring proximity to school children. Criminal history records checks shall also be required for any person or employee of the person, corporation, or other entity who contracts with a school and who will have direct contact with school children or access to the grounds of the school when children are present. The criminal history records check shall be fingerprint based or social security number based and shall also include a check of the Tennessee and National Sex Offender Registries and the Tennessee Department of Health Abuse Registry. Schools may also search the Tennessee educator licensure database (TNCompass) to determine if an applicant for a teaching position or any other position requiring proximity to school children has had a Tennessee educator license suspended or revoked for misconduct.

e. Curriculum and Graduation.

- i. The instructional program shall include, but not be limited to, the areas of English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Additionally, schools are encouraged to offer art, music, health and physical education, and world language.
- ii. Each school shall use textbooks and instructional materials that adequately cover all subjects in the school's instructional program.
- iii. Each high school shall adopt a graduation requirements policy requiring students to earn at least the minimum number of total credits required for graduation set by the State Board in Rule

o520-o1-o3-.06. The school's policy shall also require students to achieve the required minimum number of credits set by the State Board in Rule o520-o1-o3-.06 in the subjects of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. This provision shall not be construed as requiring the same courses in the subjects of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies that are required for public schools. The school shall determine the additional subject areas and credits necessary for graduation from high school as set forth in the school's graduation requirements policy to meet or exceed the minimum total number of credits set by the State Board in Rule o520-o1-o3-.06.

iv. At least once every school year, each school shall give a nationally standardized achievement test covering the areas of English language arts and math to each pupil in third (3rd) through eleventh (11th) grades; the results must be communicated to teachers and parents and kept on file at the school for one (1) calendar year. Examples of nationally standardized achievement tests include ACT/SAT and benchmark assessments. Schools may identify alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

e. Teacher Licensure and Evaluation.

- Each school shall ensure that all teachers and principals are appropriately licensed or credentialed, as defined by the accrediting agency.
- ii. Each school shall develop procedures for evaluation of all teachers and principals.
- iii. Each school shall provide a sufficient number of appropriately qualified administrators, supervisors, and other personnel, which may include, but is not limited to, librarians, and school counselors, for the student body served.

e. Administrative Rules.

- i. Each school shall maintain an operating schedule that includes the minimum number of instructional days (180) and minimum number of hours per day (6 ½) required of public schools, In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004, a school that exceeds the required six and one-half (6 ½) hours of instructional time per day for the full academic year shall be credited with the additional instructional time in amounts up to, but not exceeding, thirteen (13) instructional days each school year. Such excess instructional time shall be used in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004(e)(1). Schools that are unable to meet the required 180 instructional day requirement due to natural disaster or serious outbreak of illness affecting or endangering students or staff during the school year may request a waiver of the minimum instructional day requirement from the school's accrediting agency.
- ii. Each school shall comply with applicable state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

- iii. Each school shall develop and implement a written policy on promotion and retention. The written policy shall be communicated to students and parents via the school handbook.
- iv. Each school shall ensure that class sizes do not exceed the class size maximums set forth in state law.
- v. Each school shall maintain complete and accurate permanent records of the following for all students, attendance, disciplinary matters, work completed while enrolled at the school, and promotion or retention determinations.
- vi. Each school shall provide periodic reports of student needs and academic progress to parents or legal guardians during each school year.

4. Texas State School Accreditation Addendum (TEPSAC)

ACCS Board Approval: March 11, 2014

Guidelines: The following criteria are to be used as the minimum acceptable requirements to approve an ACCS school for accreditation in the state of Texas in addition to the requirements of Policy 5.3.1, the ACCS Accreditation Policy (i.e., ACCS Accreditation Handbook).

- A. School Involvement. The school seeking accredited status must document that the entire school participated in preparation for the accreditation visit. It is recognized that not everyone will participate to the same degree, but everyone on the school staff must participate.
- B. Compliance with State Law

There are two mentions of private school curricula in Texas state statutes.

I. Texas Education Code 25.086(a)(1), states:

EXEMPTIONS.

- 1. A child is exempt from the requirements of compulsory school attendance if the child:
 - i. attends a private or parochial school that includes in its course a study of good citizenship; . . .
- 2. Parochial and private schools are expected to observe Texas Week the week of March 2. This requirement is found in Texas Civil Statute Article 6144a:

First, it is enjoined that every home; every office, place of business and industry; every school, parochial, private, or public; every college and university; and all institutions of whatever class or character, educational or eleemosynary, be requested through this Resolution and the annual proclamations of the Governor of Texas to hoist a Texas Flag from some prominent point of vantage and let it be unfurled each day during Texas Week; and

Second, it is now and ever shall be expected that all teachers and pupils in every school of whatever class or classification shall observe Texas Week appropriately in general assemblies, in classes, clubs, and in any and all other groups as they may be assembled for school work; that schools be encouraged to assemble exhibits of Texas products, pictures, relics, books and documents, and hang in permanent places pictures of famous heroes of Texas; that schools which are in reach of battlefields, missions, and other places of historical interest and importance are hereby encouraged to make patriotic pilgrimages to such places of fame during Texas Week; but it is understood that no school is to celebrate Texas Week as a season of holidays. On the other hand, better work shall be expected of all schools throughout Texas Week; and

These requirements were passed many years ago and do not receive much notice, but private schools should be aware of them.

C. Make-up of an Accreditation Committee. All assigned accreditation committee members must either be a member of the ACCS Board of Directors, the ACCS Director of Accreditation, the head of school of an

ACCS-accredited school, or a head of school from a prospective candidate school for ACCS accreditation. The assigned committee will consist of at least two experienced members and at least one inexperienced member who will be using the visit as a training experience. In addition, at least one party must be a non-policy making member.

D. Training of Accreditation Committee Members.

- All accreditation committee members are required to have read the most current version of the ACCS
 Accreditation Procedures which will be forwarded to them at least two months prior to the scheduled
 school visit.
- 2. One of the experienced team members will be assigned responsibility of overseeing the inexperienced committee member and helping instruct him in what to look for.

E. Appeals Process.

- 1. There will be no change in the current accreditation status of a school pending disposition of an appeal.
- 2. The appealing school has the right to a hearing before the appeal body, either the ACCS Board of Directors, or an Executive Committee of the Board assigned for that purpose.
- 3. The ACCS Board of Directors is the final arbiter in assigning ACCS-accredited status to ACCS member schools. If a school is being recommended for anything other than accredited status, they may appeal the report and recommendation from the accreditation committee to the ACCS Board of Directors. The school will have 30 days to make their appeal in writing and provide sufficient documentation to substantiate their appeal. This appeal will be forwarded to the ACCS Board via the president.
- The ACCS Director of Accreditation will review and forward the appeal and supporting materials to the ACCS President, with his recommendation.
- The ACCS Board of Directors shall review the appeal and supporting documentation and make a determination on the appeal.

The ACCS Director of Accreditation shall respond in writing on behalf of the board of directors to the head of the appealing school with the board's final determination. A copy of the final disposition shall be sent to TEPSAC along with a copy of the appeal and the school's supporting documentation.

- 6. Major Discrepancy. A major discrepancy is defined as the failure of a school to sufficiently meet one or more of the criteria listed in Section 2 Standards.
- 7. Participation in TEPSAC. ACCS will actively participate in the governance of TEPSAC, and may do so through designation of a proxy to act on its behalf. The designated proxy does not have the authority to commit either the resources of ACCS or to make any policy binding ACCS and its association members.

5. VIRGINIA STATE SCHOOL ACCREDITATION ADDENDUM (VCPE)

Approved by the VCPE Board of Directors, April 22, 2021

Guidelines: The following criteria are to be used as the minimum acceptable requirements to approve an ACCS school for accreditation in the commonwealth of Virginia in addition to standards listed in Section 2.

The visit committee chair should ensure by way of the accreditation review that the school adheres to the following indicators:

- A. All accredited schools must have nondiscriminatory policies and practices in admissions, employment and all other aspects of school operation as provided by law.
 - GUIDANCE: This standard is addressed on the application for school accreditation.
- B. Each accredited school is subject to periodic on-site reviews and will have an accredited status for no longer than seven (7) years.
 - GUIDANCE: This standard is addressed by the guidelines for ACCS school accreditation. Visit committees may recommend a maximum time of five years for renewal accreditation.
- C. In order to be eligible to be accredited, a school must be operating in Virginia as a school or as a virtual school serving Virginia students for at least 12 months before beginning the accreditation process.
 - GUIDANCE: This standard is addressed by the guidelines for ACCS school accreditation. Schools must be in existence for four years to meet the conditions for candidacy. (See the application for school accreditation.)
- D. A school must be in compliance with appropriate state and federal legal requirements including but not limited to the information provided in the most recent edition of Virginia Law and Private Schools: A Guide to Opening and Operating a Private School in Virginia.
 - GUIDANCE: The school should ensure that one person on staff has reviewed the law guide.
- E. An accredited school must adhere to the maintenance and disposition of student and staff records including having policies that address:
 - Required information that must be included records;
 - 2. Storage of records;
 - 3. Handling records if school closes.
 - 4. Assignment of a custodian of records.
 - GUIDANCE: The school must have a written policy which provides specific guidance on the retention of student records in the event the school should close, and must include at a minimum: the custodian organization; contact name; contact title; address; phone; and email address.
- E. An accedited school must have a school calendar that adheres to compulsory attendance laws and includes student and teacher schedules.

GUIDANCE: Review the school calendar to ensure that it meets legal requirements.

- F. An accredited school must have policies on staff qualifications including but not limited to:
 - Job descriptions;
 - 2. Staff handbook;
 - 3. Performance evaluations;
 - 4. Fingerprint criminal background checks, which deem employee "eligible for employment" (on all employees full-time or part-time);
 - 5. Child Abuse & Neglect Registry Search (on all employees full-time or part-time).

GUIDANCE: Should be evident in policy and practice. Examine sample personnel files to check compliance.

- F. An accredited school must maintain records demonstrating professional personnel are CPR, First Aid and AED certified.
 - 1. Medication Administration Training;
 - 2. Assessment and Management of Concussions; and,
 - Prevention and Mitigation of Bullying.

GUIDANCE: Should be evident in policy and practice. Some evidence may already be included in the self study.

D. An accredited school must have written policies pertaining to Internet protection for both faculty and students.

GUIDANCE: Review policy on internet usage.

- E. An accredited school must maintain and update annually Emergency Management and Disaster Response Plans. Evidence of a written plan, specifying actions in preparing, responding to, and recovering from school crisis and emergencies. Inclusive of the following items:
 - 1. Emergency Management and Disaster Response Plans
 - 2. Medication Administration Training
 - 3. Assessment and Management of Concussions
 - 4. Prevention and Mitigation of Bullying

GUIDANCE: Some evidence may already be included in the self study.

E. Safe Schools Initiative

GUIDANCE: All schools must have at least one person trained in K-12 threat assessment no later than July 1, 2023, with evidence of the creation and implementation of a school-based threat assessment team (more than one staff member), as well as evidence of training provided to school staff.

F. Virginia Addendum to accreditation reviews (Amended 10.1.2021)

All VCPE approved accrediting associations must ensure completion of the VCPE Virginia Addendum during all Virginia private school accreditation reviews. All VCPE approved accrediting associations must submit this completed and signed document to the VCPE office within 10 days of the conclusion of the school's accreditation team visit.

APPENDIX E: ACCS BOARD POLICIES RELATED TO ACCS ACCREDITATION

RATIONALE FOR ACCREDITING

Dates: Approved 3/12/02

Objective: To establish the rationale for accreditation of ACCS member schools that have grades 1–10, in process to becoming grades 1–12.

Scope: This policy applies to all ACCS member schools applying to ACCS for accreditation.

Guidelines:

- A. ACCS accreditation policy only allows for the accreditation of ACCS member schools that have been in operation as a classical and Christian school for at least five years, and that have grown to the point where they have classes ranging from, as a minimum, grades 1–10, and are in process of growing to become a full 1–12 school. ACCS is committed to accrediting only schools that meet these criteria because they can demonstrate that they are committed to providing the whole spectrum of the Trivium: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, consistent with the developmental stages of their students, Poll-parrot, Pert, and Poetic.
- B. In addition, where multiple schools exist in the same locale, viz., a grammar school and a secondary school, with both operating under different school boards, ACCS will not accredit both schools as though they were one single school. ACCS is committed to accrediting the entire Trivium. Although multiple schools may provide all aspects of the Trivium, the separate school governments are a concern with regard to longevity of the mutual relationship, and consequently, such a relationship may be unable to commit long term to providing all stages of the Trivium. For example, if one school should choose to go a different direction, in doing so, it would remove those stages of the Trivium from the overall instruction provided by both schools. Because of the tenuous nature of such an arrangement, ACCS is not willing to accredit schools in this situation.

5.10 OUTSIDE INFLUENCE POLICY

Dates: Approved 1/30/20

Background: The original voucher policy was reviewed given new instruments for government funding models, including those that offer private vehicles with strings attached. Policy 5.09 was replaced with 5.10

Definitions: "Government funding" for schools includes grants, tax credits, educational savings accounts, vouchers, third-party pass-through funding, or other means of funding that can be conditioned upon the school.

Guidelines: ACCS-accredited schools may not accept funds if the school is required to sign an agreement with the government or outside organization in order to access the funding, if that agreement creates a future obligation, or, if by statute, accessing the fund obligates the school to future obligations by the state or another agency besides the ACCS. In other words, if the school stops accepting the state funding, any strings must immediately be severed.

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE SUBMISSION PACKAGE

ACCS Accreditation Standards

Recommendation: Pick any one of the accreditation standards. Follow the instructions to document and explain the school's compliance with that standard. Send this documentation and explanation for this one standard to the director of accreditation for review before proceeding on to the completion of the rest of the accreditation standards.

To be granted ACCS accreditation subsequent to being approved as a Candidate for Accreditation, a school must demonstrate that it has successfully met the following Criteria for Accreditation and that it can be reasonably expected to continue to achieve such:

Standard B.6. Enrollment and Employment Stability: The school must disclose data for the past five years in the following trends along with an explanation of the trends and what they mean for the school: student enrollment and retention rates; retention of school administrators; teacher retention rate (year by year). Employee attrition and retention must indicate stability and support for the school mission.

First, schools must use documentation to "show" compliance with each standard. This is the more important of the two steps.

Documentation: ("Show") (All must be published.)

- 1. Grammar/Secondary/Total Enrollment Numbers for past five years
- 2. Enrollment Trends: Summary Report
- 3. Teacher Retention Rates for past five years
- 4. Administrator Retention Rates for past five yearsSecond, schools must "tell" the reviewer how the documentation demonstrates compliance. Also, when long documents are used, tell the reviewer specifically where to look.

Explanation: ("Tell")

- I. Enrollment rates have remained relatively stable over the last five years, with an average retention rate of 93%. See Enrollment Trends: Summary Report for explanation of trend causes and effects over the last five years.
- 2. Teacher retention rates have remained steady for the last five years for an average of 89%.
- 3. Likewise, administrator retention rates have remained steady for the last five years for an average of 89%.
- 4. Faculty/Staff Retention: Each year faculty and staff move on from ABC Academy mostly due to retirement, family needs, or to pursue other interests. Salary pressure in the context of a small Christian school is also a contributing factor, and the board and administration continue to seek ways to improve the compensation of staff. As can be expected, we also have had a small percentage of staff and faculty that have not had contracts renewed over the last five years due to poor job performance.

APPENDIX G: INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: SELF-EVALUATION TOOL

How to use this tool: In the months before an accreditation visit, use this tool to train your teachers. Review these principles in staff meetings, then ask your teachers to implement these methods. Follow up training with informal observations to see teachers put these principles into practice. This way, when it's time for the site visit, teachers will have practiced teaching lessons that are consistent with these principles.

How NOT to use this tool: Please do not tell your teachers to overtly demonstrate these techniques on the day our accreditors visit their class. Direct your teachers to teach normally. Visit committee members are not seeking a demonstration, they need to see what your school's daily practice. We don't expect to see these techniques in every classroom observation.

Do NOT instruct teachers to stop the flow of the lesson so that they may present one of the techniques listed here. For example, grammar teachers should not present recitations for each visit committee member. Nor should they recite a memory verse each period. Visit committee members do not expect to see every method in every lesson.

Grammar School

- 1. The teacher demonstrates the attitudes, behaviors, and enthusiasm for the subject that he/she hopes to instill in the learners. "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).
- 2. Are teachers using songs and choral recitations (chants, jingles, etc.) to help students memorize facts? Do teachers have students memorize and recite passages of literature, Scripture, etc.? Do teachers use "call and response" and catechisms?
- 3. Are students using motions and movement in the acquiring and remembering of facts/concepts? Do lessons for the youngest students appeal to as many senses as possible?
- 4. Does each lesson start with a review of prior material? Are there frequent reviews of facts and memorization? Do teachers use classroom transitions to review facts?
- 5. Does the teacher ask students what they already know about the subject, so that the teacher may start the lesson from that point (as opposed to assuming the students know nothing and teaching the same information over again)?
- 6. Are students encouraged to express and articulate what they are discovering/learning in their own words (show and tell, read aloud, tell stories, etc.)?
- 7. Do students have opportunity to explore, find, collect, and identify in the environment around them?
- 8. Are teachers teaching to an objective that is clear to students and evident to an observer?

9. During the lesson, do teachers assess student understanding in order to gauge whether students comprehend the material?

Logic School

The following types of activities should be observed in all courses, i.e., history, literature, math, and science, not only in the logic class.

- 1. Do units or lessons begin with questions that frame the concept, idea, or skill under consideration?
- 2. Do teachers engage students so that students are active participants in the lesson and learning?
- 3. Do teachers ask questions that require students to go beyond yes or no answers, or short, rote responses? Are teachers asking "why" a lot?
- 4. Do teachers engage students in solving questions or analyzing answers, following up student responses by asking students to defend, refute, or explain their answers?
- 5. Are there frequent teacher-led and even student-led discussions (Socratic circles, fishbowl, etc.)? Are students working problems on the board, or discussing in small groups and reporting to the larger group?
- 6. Are teachers using time lines and charts in such a way as to compare, contrast, and juxtapose ideas and events with and against one another?
- 7. Are teachers using different forms of debate and discussion such that students are considering arguments and lines of thought in a cohesive way?
- 8. Are principles of logic integrated in classes other than logic class?
- 9. Does the lesson include time for reviewing of prior material, e.g., at the beginning and end of the lesson?
- 10. Are teachers teaching to an objective that is clear to students and evident to an observer?
- 11. During the lesson, do teachers assess student understanding in order to gauge whether students are comprehending the material?

Rhetoric School

The following types of activities should be observed in all courses, i.e., history, literature, math, and science, not only in the rhetoric class.

- I. Do teachers or students do most of the intellectual work in the class? Are students active participants (or passive recipients) in classroom learning?
- 2. Do the teacher's instructions require creativity, as well as clarity, in written and spoken work?
- 3. What is the ratio of "teacher-talk" vs. "student-talk" time in the classroom? (The expectation is that the higher the grade level, the more classroom discussion and student participation.)
- 4. Do teachers attempt to engage all students? Are "discussions" primarily voluntary, or does the teacher normally use involuntary assessments? Is it possible to hide in this class and not be involved?

- 5. If students wait long enough, will the teacher provide the answers to their own questions? Does the teacher repeat all student answers or are the students required to listen to each others' answers?
- 6. Do students ask questions? Do students ask each other questions? Or is the class mainly students responding to teacher questions?
- 7. Do students work problems on the board or in small groups, with other students "coaching" or helping, with teachers acting as "quality control?"
- 8. Do students routinely discuss questions of content and meaning using seminar-style discussions? Are these discussions generally student-driven, at least in the upper rhetoric grades?
- 9. Is Socratic dialogue used in classrooms? Are Harkness table discussions used in the classrooms?
- 10. Are students frequently speaking at length in their own words in the form of presentations, etc.?
- 11. Does the lesson include time for reviewing of prior material, e.g., at the beginning and end of the lesson?
- 12. Are teachers teaching to an objective that is clear to students and evident to an observer?
- 13. During the lesson, do teachers assess student understanding in order to gauge whether students are comprehending the material?

Written Assignments and Grading

- 1. Do assignments and tests include more open-ended and essay-type questions than those at the grammar or logic levels?
- 2. On tests/exams are students writing complete thoughts rather than multiple choice, one-word answers,
- 3. Do students take oral tests/exams?
- 4. Is classroom participation assessed at the rhetoric level?

Classroom Observations, Teacher Training, Etc.

- 1. Does an administrator regularly observe classroom instruction and provide specific feedback based on these observations? Do administrators evaluate teachers on their application of the tools of learning?
- 2. Are teachers expected to develop lesson plans that teach to a particular objective for student learning?
- 3. Is ongoing teacher training provided during the school year? Are the topics of this training designed to strengthen weaknesses identified during classroom observations?
- 4. Do administrators provide annual teacher training in the Seven Laws of Teaching?
- On weekly lesson plans, are teachers expected to indicate how they are teaching classically (perhaps one example for the week)?
- 6. Do curriculum guides include a section that reminds teachers to integrate the tools of learning?

91 Revised March 13, 2024

APPENDIX H: ACCS TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Revision 1- 2004

Revision 2— 2017. Required for schools who are accredited or under accreditation renewal after January 1, 2018. Teachers who were certified under the 2004 standards are grandfathered into their current level of certification, but must meet the 2017 standards to advance to the next level.

Note on implementation: ACCS-accredited schools, with existing teacher certification programs approved by ACCS, will need to develop revised programs compliant with these guidelines when they renew ACCS school accreditation. These schools may elect to do so sooner, at their discretion, if desired.

Requirements

- A. All accredited ACCS schools must certify their full-time teaching staff in accordance with this document. (In their specific plan, schools will address how part-time staff are to be included. Part-time staff may be exempt from mandatory aspects of ACCS teacher certification.)
- B. All provisional, professional, and master level certifications must be registered with the ACCS by the accredited school.
- C. All accredited ACCS schools are asked to recognize the certification level of any teacher who transfers from another ACCS-accredited school.

Purpose

ACCS Teacher Certification provides schools and administrators with a common understanding of what a classical Christian teacher should be, and a structure by which a path to excellence can be awarded. Teacher certification should verify the presence of demonstrable philosophical understanding and competent teaching skills in the one certified. ACCS Teacher Certification has no relationship or connection to state teacher licensing or public school certification.

Philosophy

Modern (public) teacher certification prescribes a series of courses and some service in the classroom. This system arises from the idea that most people can be trained to do the job. Classical Christian philosophy asserts that teaching is a gift (Ephesians 4:8–11, Romans 12: 3–8), and a practiced art. For those who have the gift (and it is given, as all spiritual gifts, in varying degrees), it must also be developed. The ancients did this through an apprenticeship.

Rather than passing a prescribed course of classes, apprenticeship involves a combination of training, observed instruction, imitation of a master, and evaluation by a master. Historically, this process takes artisans from novice to apprentice, to journeyman, to master.

In this light, the ACCS teacher certification system is built around the local accredited school. We believe that those who serve alongside a teacher know them best. And, we believe that mastery is assessed in community, with the local organization's people as the keepers of the flame, so to speak. Nationally, we provide these guidelines to ensure that each local school is able to understand and provide a consistent standard to teachers. Rather than the apprenticeship terms above, we use three more common terms: provisional, professional, and master level certification.

Guidelines

Certification is awarded to a teacher who can demonstrate that he or she has met the following primary requirements. The categories listed below are important and none may be excluded. However, ACCS desires to establish a somewhat flexible process for demonstrating competence. The measures of competence listed below are presumed to be those most common to classical Christian schools. They are not meant to be the only means to demonstrate competence. School administrators may substitute alternative forms of assessment of teacher competencies as they deem them necessary and appropriate.

Once the administrator of an ACCS-accredited school has established the school-specific guidelines in accordance with the below framework, they must be submitted to the ACCS Director of Accreditation for mutual concurrence before becoming, or they will become the accepted norm for that school.

When a teacher completes the requirements for a given level of competency, the administrator will need to enter the ACCS Member's Resource Center (MRC) and fill out the teacher certification form indicating the teacher's name, the level attained, and the date it was attained. (See https://mrc.classicalchristian.org/certified-teacher-list/) ACCS will record this information in our database and mail back a certificate for the administrator to sign and present to the teacher, commemorating the achievement.

Verification

The local school administrator of an ACCS-accredited school is authorized to determine whether competency has been demonstrated for purposes of ACCS Teacher Certification. The school administrator is only authorized to grant teacher certification to teachers who work for the same school as the administrator. However, teachers themselves will receive a certificate acknowledging their certification. Teachers can expect to transfer this certificate and status as an ACCS certified teacher to any other ACCS member school.

Certification requirements

- **I. Provisional certification**: Candidates for a provisional teaching certificate must demonstrate that they have met the following qualifications. These must be done by the start of the second year of the teacher's full-time tenure at the school.
 - A. Fundamental training in classical Christian education

- Evidenced by a training course taken as offered by the employee's school, prior training in classical Christian education at the collegiate level, previous classical conference attendance, ACCS endorsed training (live or online) in classical Christian pedagogy, or the ACCS Foundation of Classical Christian Excellence course (FCCE), available in January 2019.
- · Philosophy of the Christian aspects of classical Christian education
- Evidenced by the submission of a written paper to the administrator for review after completing requisite readings.
- C. Philosophy of the pedagogical or classical aspects of classical Christian education
 - Evidenced by the submission of a written paper to the administrator for review after completing requisite readings.
- D. Knowledge of subject matter
 - Evidenced by the successful completion of thirty hours of college credit, or equivalent experience in the main content area.
- E. Knowledge of children
 - Best evidenced by parenting of own children. May be enhanced, or, if childless, introduced through
 the study of children's development and training, according to biblically grounded authors. In addition, prior experience with children of the applicable age(s).
- F. Knowledge of the teaching process
 - · Evidenced by reading and providing some written response to The Seven Laws of Teaching.
- II. Professional certification (called ACCS-Certified Teacher): Teachers who have been teaching full-time at the issuing school for more than three years must achieve this level of certification or be placed on probation until it is completed.
 - A. Completion of all requirements for the Provisional Certification.
 - B. Completion of the ACCS Foundation of Classical Christian Excellence course (FCCE)¹. (This requirement to take effect January 2019.)
 - C. Demonstration of successful teaching with a minimum of three years of successful teaching experience at an ACCS-accredited school. Success is measured by the receipt of positive personnel evaluations during that three-year period.
 - I This course is offered periodically by the ACCS at the Repairing the Ruins conference, as a video course online (free to members), or through an ACCS Certified Training partner or event.

D. Evidence of continual learning

- Documented and personal evidence that teachers are continuing to learn and grow in their interest and knowledge of the above areas, particularly in their understanding and application of the classical Christian philosophy.
- 2. Two practical demonstrations of this continuing interest are the amount and type of reading done, as well as continued through classical Christian teacher training.

III. Master's certification

- A. Completion of all requirements for the professional certification.
- B. Evidence of training in the Trivium.
- C. The involvement of the teacher in the development of uniquely classical curriculum within the school, training other teachers within the school, or conducting training in classical Christian education on a national level.
- D. The teacher will demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of logic and rhetoric.
- ACCS recommends the "History of Classical and Christian Education" a graduate-level course for educators from New Saint Andrews college. Learn more at https://nsa.seththoburn.com/ history-of-classical-and-christian-education.