



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: Indiana State Board of Education
FROM: Office of School Accountability, Indiana Department of Education
RE: Third-Party Recognition Petition for the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
DATE: March 9, 2022

This memorandum provides a summary of the information provided by the organization in the petition, as well as the Department's final recommendation regarding the recognition of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) as a third-party accrediting organization.

Background & Organization Overview

Mission and Objectives: ACSI is an accrediting organization whose mission is described as "...ACSI exists to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide as they prepare students academically and inspire them to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ."

ACSI was founded in 1978 as an accrediting organization and accredits 23,000 schools across the United States and in 100 countries worldwide.

Member Schools: Currently, ACSI has twenty-four (24) fully accredited member schools in Indiana, as well as 235 other member schools in the organization's Central Division.

Agency Personnel: In its petition, ACSI lists its Board of Directors and their experience, as well as outlining the process by which appropriate personnel are selected for divisional accreditation committees, including a Divisional Director, Divisional Commissioners, School Review Team Chairs, and other members of ACSI's accreditation commission. Specifically, each Divisional Commissioner is assigned to a commission by the corresponding Divisional Director, who also is responsible for assigning School Review Team Chairs for each school based on their relevant experience and familiarity with ACSI's accreditation standards and processes. All personnel assigned to the School Review Team are recruited by the Chairperson and are required to have experience working in an ACSI accredited school.

Accreditation Process and Procedures

Review and Approval Process: To participate in ACSI's roughly three (3) year accreditation process, schools must first submit be accepted as a candidate for accreditation by submitting an accreditation application, which includes a self-assessment demonstrating that they meet the association's standards. Once a school has submitted its accreditation application, the corresponding Divisional Accreditation Director reviews the application and assigns an ACSI representative to visit the school. During the visit, the representative reviews the school's facilities, policies, and other relevant information, as well as assessing the school's current adherence to ACSI's standards and indicators and providing an overview of ACSI's self-study processes for accreditation. The ACSI representative then submits a report of their findings to the Divisional Office with "...a recommendation as to the readiness of the school to move into a candidacy period."

Schools who are approved for candidacy have three (3) years to "...work on their compliance to the ACSI Standards and Indicators, write a self-study report, and host an onsite visiting team." Each fall during the candidacy period, the school must submit a Candidacy School Annual



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Report to the Divisional Office to be reviewed by the commission to track the school's progress on compliance with ACSI's standards. During this period between acceptance into candidacy and the assignment of a team chair, the school is expected to identify a Steering Committee to lead the school's accreditation process and work toward compliance to all standards and indicators.

Approximately twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months before the end of a school's candidacy term, a Team Chair is assigned to the school. The chair then makes an initial visit to the school to "review all standards and indicators, as well as other basic documents." The Steering Committee then initiates Standard Committees for each of ACSI's eight (8) standards and begins working on the self-study. The school works with the chair to schedule a team visit at the conclusion of the candidacy period. Members of the school visit team familiarize themselves with the school by reviewing the school's documents and self-study report before the visit. The team chair then conducts a final visit two (2) months prior to the team's scheduled visit to make a final determination on whether the school is ready for the full team visit. Once team visits are confirmed, the school team conducts its three (3) day onsite review of the school, including classroom observations, interviews with school personnel, and other evaluation activities. At the conclusion of the visit, the team meets with the school and provides a summary of its findings and team recommendation for accreditation.

Expectations and Requirements for Approval: Once the Visit Team completes its visit, the chairperson finalizes the team report and submits it to the Divisional Office, who then reviews the report, provides the school with a copy for accuracy purposes, and forwards the recommendation to the Divisional Commission for review. The Divisional Commission reviews the report, then votes on whether to approve or deny the school for accreditation. Schools are eligible to receive accreditation for a maximum of five (5) years, but the Commission may require a mid-term visit, or grant a lesser term if necessary. The Divisional Office then sends a final letter to the school verifying the decision for accreditation to the head of the school and includes a final copy of the team report.

Assistance, Monitoring, and Communication: ACSI maintains regular contact with schools throughout the accreditation cycle, requiring schools to submit annual updates to ensure schools remain in compliance with ACSI accreditation standards. Required updates include any updated demographics, any substantive changes, progress on their major recommendations, a financial statement, and certification spreadsheet.

Accreditation Standards

Standards and Expectations: The ACSI REACH Standards set consists of eight (8) Standards, including Philosophy and Foundations, Governance and Executive Leadership, Home and Community Relations and Student Activities, Personnel, Instructional Program, and Resources, Student Care, Character, Values, and Spiritual Formation of Students, and Continuous School Improvement. Schools are evaluated on their compliance with these standards utilizing one of four (4) indicators: Exceeds Compliance, Compliance, Partial Compliance, or Noncompliance.

Evaluation Process: Candidates for ACSI accreditation are expected to demonstrate compliance with all accreditation standards and complete the self-study report to obtain accreditation. Candidates with multiple areas of deficiency may remain as candidates until the



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

deficiencies are addressed, while member schools found to be deficient during the school's annual update may be required to submit additional documentation as part of an accreditation review.

Signed Recognition Agreement

ACSI provided the Department with a signed copy of the recognition agreement and was awarded points accordingly.

Department Recommendation

Each petition is reviewed and scored based on an established rubric where an organization may earn a score between 0 and 4. The Department recommends for approval a petition receiving a final score of 3 or higher. After reviewing and scoring the materials provided, ACSI received a final score of 3.75 out of 4 possible points. Since ACSI received a score higher than 3, the Department recommends that ACSI's petition for recognition be renewed for a recognition term of eight (8) years.