

RATIONALE FOR ACCREDITATION

Christian schools are places where every action, every idea, and every thought is examined in the light of God's revealed Word.

A worthy goal, to be sure, but one that does not happen automatically. The school might have the word "Christian" in its name, and employ believing teachers in its classrooms. However, the skillful interweaving of biblical principles throughout all of learning—for all ages—is an activity that requires constant honing and attention.

And true biblical community is not only demonstrated in the classroom, but throughout the organization of the school—in the boardroom, in the administrative policies, and in relationships with parents and the community.

Thus, schools demonstrate their seriousness about achieving those lofty ideals by holding itself to high standards, and inviting an external evaluation to validate their assessment.

Vision to Action is a process that addresses that desire, and seeks to meet several goals:

A. Measuring how well your school is meeting its mission. The CSI accreditation standards and procedures are designed, in part, to lead your school through a thorough self-evaluation based on its own mission—what you say in your own words you are doing for the children and young people whom you are called to serve.

B. Meeting standards of your province or state. To become eligible for funding from governmental agencies many schools are required to earn accreditation from an organization recognized by the province or state. Some provinces and states simply require that to be recognized as a school, your school must be accredited. *Vision to Action* is designed to help meet these needs.

C. Improving your school's programs. Boards, staffs, and administrators must constantly evaluate and improve every aspect of educating students. Jesus gave stern

warnings to those who would harm his little ones (Matthew 18); he takes what we do with his children seriously, and so must we. *Vision to Action* creates a means for Christian educators from several schools to help Christian educators and board members from your school to provide the best for the Master's children and young people.

D. Informing parents of the quality of your school. Parents should surely be involved in the process of school evaluation—the school serves their children. But also parents feel more secure in the education of their children when a qualified outside organization holds their school accountable and places its stamp of approval on the educational program through the process of evaluation and accreditation.

E. Demonstrating quality Christian education to prospective parents. Increasingly parents who are inquiring about enrolling their children in your school wonder who accredits your school. The assumption is that a school that has sought and gained accreditation provides a better quality education than one that has not. That is not necessarily true, but parents often have only accreditation and word of mouth as ways to judge the quality of a school.

F. Meeting requirements to receive matching gifts and grant money. Many companies, organizations, individuals, and foundations want to know that the schools that they are giving gifts to are high quality educational organizations. Often the test of that is accreditation.

G. Giving students access to quality higher education. Some colleges and universities will look more favorably on students that graduate from accredited schools.

Vision to Action is designed to provide your school with a high quality Christian school self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and school improvement accreditation tool that will add significant value to your program.



FROM VISION TO ACTION

THE BASIS AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

From Vision to Action was first published by Christian Schools International in 1993 as a basis and definition of what a Christian school should be. CSI Accreditation's standards are based upon this document.

A Statement of Belief for Christian Schools International and Its Schools

Every school is based upon a specific system of belief, whether it is governed and guided by the government, a private board or society, or a church or denomination. CSI schools are no exception. They are based upon an understanding of God and his world, which in turn gives shape to the purpose of the school.

On the foundation of God's infallible Word—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament—we affirm the following summary of the Christian faith.

God. There is one infinite, holy, loving, personal God who speaks to us in Scripture and reveals himself to us in his acts of creation, salvation, and renewal, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As finite human beings created in God's image, we declare that it is our purpose and privilege to worship, honor, serve, and obey him.

Creation. The world belongs to God, who created it and faithfully sustains it by his providence. Creation is the theater of God's glory, displaying his power and majesty. God calls us to discover creation's resources, to receive these gifts with thanksgiving and delight, and to use them wisely as stewards and caretakers who are responsible to God and to our neighbor.

Sin. Our ability to carry out our human calling to honor God, serve our neighbor, and care for the creation is marred by the corrosive effects of sin,

which touch every part of life. When our first parents listened to Satan's lie, questioned God's Word, and rebelled against him, they brought his judgment upon themselves, their posterity, and the creation. Brokenness, disease, hate, arrogance, alienation, abuse of creation, and ultimately death are the inevitable fruits of sin in our world.

Covenant. However, God has not rejected or abandoned his world but has turned to it in love. He gave the rainbow sign to Noah as a pledge of his promise to care for all creatures. He made a covenant with Abraham, promising to be a faithful God to him and his children, and through them to bless all nations. Through his servant Moses, God disclosed his law for the human community, promising rich blessing as the fruit of obedience. God always keeps his promises. We acknowledge with gratitude and joy that he is our God and the God of our children, that we are his people, and that this is his world.

Redemption. As he promised, God in love sent Jesus Christ into the world to save it from sin and its consequences. The atoning death of the Son of God is the only payment for the debt of human sin, and Christ's resurrection is the only liberation from the powers of evil and death. The victorious Lord sends the Holy Spirit to create faith, cleanse and renew hearts, and build a community of love and holiness. It is this community's mission to proclaim and live this good news and to make disciples of the nations.

Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and he reigns over all things for our good. To be a citizen of this kingdom is a privilege, a joy, and a responsibility. Led by his Spirit, we place our every thought, word, and deed in the service of Christ's present and coming reign, and we live daily in the confident hope of his triumphant return.

A Statement of Purpose for Christian Schools

On the foundation of God's infallible Word—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament—we affirm the following summary of the mission of the Christian school.

Community. The Christian school, as an enterprise of the entire community, enables and equips all of its children to serve the Lord, to love their fellow human beings, and to care for God's creation. The school community provides an environment of love

and care within which students are nurtured. As an indispensable partner with the home and the church, the Christian school leads children to live according to biblical wisdom.

Staff. Staff members of the Christian school, living in joyful fellowship with God, model the love of Christ to children. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism, Christian teachers view their work as a vocation. The calling of a Christian schoolteacher is to pass on the wisdom of the Christian tradition to students and to help them understand and apply the transforming power of the gospel to contemporary society and culture.

Students. Children are God's image bearers, entrusted to parents and the Christian community as his gifts. The Christian school encourages students to develop their gifts in response to God and in loving service to fellow human beings. Students are led to know God and to respond to him in every dimension of the creation and in every aspect of their lives.

Curriculum. The Christian school curriculum is developed and organized so that children may come to know God more deeply and richly and live for him more faithfully. Since human experience in all its rich variety is a good gift from the Creator who remains involved in his world, the Christian school curriculum explores all dimensions of creation. God's design for the creation and his will for human society and culture must be understood and obeyed. This is the way of godly wisdom. Students are taught to recognize the brokenness that sin brings to God's carefully designed world and are challenged to bring the healing power of Jesus Christ to a fallen world.

Guidelines for Implementation

Because Christians live between memory and vision, the Christian school embodies the triple dimensions of conserver, inquirer, and reformer, and it seeks to develop these dimensions in the lives of its students.

As **conserver**, the Christian school community preserves and passes on the story of its tradition—the meaning, the purpose, the roots, the cultural anchor points, the accumulated wisdom, and the world and life view.

As **inquirer**, the Christian school instills a love for learning and for thinking critically and fruitfully about the world and human experience.

As **reformer**, the Christian school is guided by the vision of a new and better world—the kingdom

of God. Specifically, the school fosters discipleship that acknowledges the lordship of Jesus Christ. This life of discipleship includes such dimensions as worshiping God, discerning idolatry, enjoying creation, caring for the earth, creating beauty, and seeking justice.

Against this three-dimensional backdrop, Christian Schools International and its schools seek to implement the purposes that flow from our statement of belief.

Community

The Christian school, as an enterprise of the entire community, enables and equips children to serve the Lord, to love their fellow human beings, and to care for God's creation. The school community provides an environment of love and care within which students are nurtured. As an indispensable partner with the home and the church, the Christian school leads children to live according to biblical wisdom.

1. Authority

All authority is instituted by God; therefore, the authority of the school is derived from God, who calls the Christian community to educate its children in the same way that parents are called to do so. The community, through the structure of a separate society or through the structure of a church, assigns the responsibility for governing the school to a board, which it elects or appoints. The board is accountable to God, from whom it derives authority, and to the community, to which it is responsible.

2. The Task of the Community

The community gives shape and purpose to the Christian school. It demonstrates commitment to and support of the school and its mission, thereby contributing to its health and vitality. In this way, the community ensures that Christian education not only will thrive today, but also will be available for future generations of God's children.

3. The Task of the Board

The board is responsible for governing and guiding the school, acting on behalf of the Christian community in obedience to Christ. Therefore, it provides leadership and support to all those it serves as it

- continually articulates, clarifies, and promotes the school's mission and communicates the mission to the community to ensure that the school will be well equipped to serve future generations,
- formulates and approves programs and policies consistent with the school's goals

and supports the chief administrator in implementing them,

- appoints and supports all staff members and is responsible to see that all are included in ongoing evaluation designed to strengthen the school's ability to accomplish its mission,
- evaluates the chief administrator in a way that is constructive and just,
- participates in formulating and approving the school's annual and long-range goals,
- encourages the entire school community—teachers, staff, students, parents, pastors—as it carries out the mission of the school,
- adheres to governmental requirements insofar as doing so does not diminish the essential and distinctive character and goals of the Christian school.

4. Appointment of Board Members

The society or church appoints those who show evidence of

- their personal salvation by faith and daily walk with God,
- belonging to the community of Christ by holding membership in, faithfully attending, and participating in the life of a church that is faithful to Scripture and with whose teaching and doctrine this Statement of Faith is consistent,
- inservice or preservice training provided by the school, which could include reading appropriate materials and discussing them with a mentor,
- a gift for leadership in administration, in discernment, in an ability to articulate the vision, or in the ability to motivate and encourage others,
- understanding of and demonstrated support for the school's mission, educational creed, purposes, and goals,
- consistency between word and deed by enrolling their own children in a CSI school, unless an exception must be made for children with special needs.

5. Development of Board Members

Development or inservice education is designed to refresh and deepen understanding of the school's mission, which is accomplished by activities such as

- participating in an orientation session prior to or soon after being seated on the board,
- demonstrating a commitment to articulate, protect, and promote the mission of the school by reading publications on the topic of Christian education,
- participating in scheduled discussions, seminars, conferences, workshops, or retreats

on topics pertinent to Christian education and the responsibilities of holding office,

- visiting the school premises regularly,
- as a member of a board team, periodically interviewing school staff members to learn how the board can assist staff in advancing and accomplishing the mission of the school and in hearing staff concerns for the school,
- participating in the life of the school.

Staff

Staff members of the Christian school, living in joyful fellowship with God and his people, model the love of Christ to children. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism, Christian teachers view their work as a vocation. The calling of a Christian schoolteacher is to pass on the wisdom of the Christian tradition to students and to help them understand and apply the transforming power of the gospel to contemporary society and culture.

1. CSI schools depend on teachers and administrators who think, teach, and live in a biblically based, and culturally engaged manner.
 - When possible, staff members have received college or post-graduate training from a Christian institution.
 - Personal qualifications include evidence of personal salvation by faith and daily walk with God. Staff members also hold membership in, faithfully attend, and participate in the life of a church that is faithful to Scripture and with whose teaching and doctrine this Statement of Faith is consistent.
 - Staff members demonstrate support for the school's mission, educational creed, purposes, and goals.
 - Professional qualifications include relevant training and experience, demonstrated effectiveness, an ability to translate the school's creeds into practice, and commitment to required further training.
2. Excellence is pursued because God's work is under way.
 - Christian school staff members pursue their work as a response to God's grace and redemption; true success and achievement are measured by how they meet their potential and build the kingdom.
 - Christian schoolteachers are able to diagnose student needs and design appropriate learning situations. They are also artists who use imagination, intuition, and drama.

- Christian school staff members devote time and resources to assessing, evaluating, and improving themselves and the school.
 - Christian school staff members pursue a wide range of professional development activities, such as formal classes, workshops, research, conferences, and educational travel in order to broaden their horizons, increase their effectiveness, improve the school's programs, and energize the community's sense of the school's mission.
3. All staff members model bold Christian discipleship, including
- love for God,
 - compassion and selflessness toward all,
 - an interest in learning and inquiry,
 - willingness to be creative and innovative,
 - involvement in the community,
 - evidence of discerning choices in Christian living,
 - respect for diversity that does not conflict with Christian practice.

Students

Children are God's image bearers, entrusted to parents and the Christian community as his gifts. The Christian school encourages students to develop their gifts in response to God and in loving service to fellow human beings. Students are led to know God and respond to him in every dimension of the creation in every aspect of their lives.

1. All students are created by God. Because each student bears God's image and carries unique and distinct God-given gifts, the Christian school staff and community
 - treat students at all times and under all circumstances with respect. Children must feel safe from mean-spirited criticism, sarcasm, ridicule, and harm; they should instead practice and experience love, concern, and cooperation,
 - provide opportunities for spiritual growth through worship, service, and celebration of God and his gifts,
 - affirm and nurture the varying gifts, learning styles, and intelligences found in all its students, respecting the contributions of all,
 - provide an environment that leads to the mutual upbuilding of all students by encouraging cooperation and using competition appropriately.
2. Ordinarily students will be admitted based upon their own faith commitment or that of their parent or guardian who

- confesses Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior,
- is an active member in a Christian church,
- agrees with the statement of belief and purpose of the school,
- gives permission for the school to request a letter of recommendation from a pastor or Christian leader,
- is responsible for paying or arranging the payment of tuition,
- cooperates fully with the school in accomplishing its mission.

Because the school seeks to serve all Christian parents or guardians who meet these requirements, it is eager to accept students of all races, nationalities, and ethnic origins.

3. Students are challenged to
 - respond to the call to redemption and the claims of Christ upon their lives,
 - be active in their own learning and, as they mature, to discern secular thought and action in all areas of life and learning,
 - actively participate in the life of the school and enhance its ability to accomplish its mission,
 - respect all schoolmates and assist and contribute to their intellectual, social, and spiritual growth.

Curriculum

The Christian school curriculum is developed and organized so that children may come to know God more deeply and live for him more faithfully. Since human experience in all its rich variety is a good gift from the Creator who remains involved in his world, the Christian school curriculum explores all dimensions of creation. God's design for the creation and his will for human society and culture must be understood and obeyed. This is the way of godly wisdom. Students are taught to recognize the brokenness that sin brings to God's carefully designed world and are challenged to bring the healing power of Jesus Christ to a fallen world.

1. Curriculum is developed to fulfill the mission of the school. This approach takes precedence over the mandates of textbook publishers or legislators.
 - Administrators, education committees, and teacher groups develop and regularly evaluate Christian perspectives in all areas of the curriculum in order to bring practice in line with the school's mission.
 - Teachers regularly develop and evaluate their philosophy of education and its relationship to classroom practice, the

material under study, and the school's mission.

2. Instruction is effective and meaningful for the student, allowing for participation, critical thinking, and constructive interaction. The curriculum includes opportunities for out-of-classroom experiences, field trips, student and teacher exchanges, internships, and educational travel.
3. The curriculum considers the child, recognizing the intellectual, social, spiritual, physical, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of a complete Christian life.
4. The curriculum offers opportunities and fosters responsibilities to exercise discernment—the making of informed Christian choices based on the Word of God.
 - Staff members and students together discover and delight in the world's cultural and social benefits.
 - Staff members and students together fulfill their obligation to examine the world's idols and its cultural and social problems and to work for attitudes and solutions that glorify God.
 - Staff members and students give discerning attention to the values, structures, and worldviews of powerful cultural forces such as the mass media.
5. Taking into account the abilities and gifts of all students, the curriculum includes both knowledge and skills.

Knowledge includes

 - the story of God's people as found in the Bible and church history
 - the realities of the natural world
 - the expressions of human culture
 - a sense of history
 - familiarity with the world—how it works and how God wants it to work

Essential skills include

 - reading
 - writing
 - mathematics
 - communication through various media
 - finding and critically processing information
 - ability to learn in a variety of settings, including individual, group, and virtual.
6. Mentors, tutors, or support groups provide love and confidential help for students as needed.
7. The curriculum includes a global perspective with an awareness of the worldwide family of God.

- Literature is chosen to represent and celebrate God's truth wherever it is found throughout ethnic groups and cultures.
 - Speakers and special activities illustrate God's love and the coming of his kingdom around the globe.
 - Activities across the curriculum explore the cultures of the world and the role of the church in each area.
 - Students learn to care for and enrich the lives of others outside their school community in the same way that they care for each other.
8. The way the school uses time, space, resources, and personnel facilitates the goals of the school and meets the needs of all students.
 - Board and staff groups design and regularly evaluate school structures that keep practice in line with the school's mission.
 - School structures are flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of methods and a variety of resources.