



What Does it Mean to Be an ACSI Accredited School?

Our staff and Board of Directors worked diligently on earning accreditation with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). This accreditation is in addition to our Iowa Department of Education accreditation. The accreditation program of ACSI is designed to assist member schools in achieving a standard of excellence and to encourage them in a continuous process of assessment and ongoing development. To desire excellence is to take seriously our commitment to Christ, whose name is excellent (Psalm 8:1). The process of achieving and maintaining accredited status is a means of proclaiming our commitment to doing things well.

The major benefit of ACSI accreditation for our school is the documentation of an intensive appraisal of each component of our ministry. The subsequent benefit is the status of being an accredited school. "Accreditation is a process of recognizing educational institutions for their standards, performance, integrity and quality" (Lowrie, 1984).

The Association of Christian Schools International Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for the accreditation program. Academic Affairs' mission is to provide programs, materials, and services that will enhance Christian schools' spiritual and academic effectiveness. Accreditation enables our school to maintain and improve the quality of our educational program and to expand our implementation of a philosophy of Christian education.

Two major themes are obvious throughout the ACSI accreditation program. First, the program probes the spiritual aspects of each component of our school. Second, the program addresses the educational quality and integrity of our school. The latter addresses the issues that demonstrate that the school is true to its own statements of philosophy, mission, and goals, and that it is meeting the standards of quality that are recognized by ACSI.

Meeting the accreditation standards and completing the self-study was a rigorous but very worthwhile process. It required the intensive work of the school staff for several years. In responding to the questions in the *ACSI Manual for School Accreditation-Evaluative Criteria*, the school explained its approaches and assessed its strengths and weaknesses. It also suggested plans for improvement in each of the component areas of the self-study. Supplementary documentation was required to support the answers and conclusions of the self-study.

ACSI is a charter member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPA), and the accreditation program of ACSI has been fully recognized by them. NCPA is a national review panel of standards and procedures of private school accrediting associations and is recognized in a number of states as an indicator of a quality accreditation process.

The ACSI Visiting Team that conducted the most recent inspection completed a concluding report of their visit. In their report, the inspectors praised the school for the excellent standards demonstrated in many areas. Some of these include:

- The biblically sound philosophy and foundational documents which are an integral part of daily life at the school
- The strong academic preparation of students, allowing them to be highly successful at the high school level
- The dedicated administration, faculty, and staff who passionately model the school's mission with students and families
- The Board of Director's ongoing commitment to their own training
- The staff's outstanding partnership with parents
- The school's exemplar Curriculum Guides
- The comprehensive worldview training of students
- The attention to detail of crisis management planning
- The active student discipleship efforts of the staff

The ACSI Visiting Team report was very complimentary of the school staff and program, repeatedly congratulating the school staff and program for the excellent Christian education being offered at our school.

