



ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN  
TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

# **ACCREDITATION** **HANDBOOK**

## **Procedures and Standards of Accreditation for:**

Preschool/Early Ed  
Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Distance/Digital Standards  
Preschool Gold Seal Program (FL Only)  
ACTS-WASC Co-accreditation (CA & HI only)

## **Membership & Recognition with:**

Arkansas Department of Education - Office of School Choice  
Coalition of Christian School Accreditors  
Council for American Private Education  
Florida Association of Academic Non-Public Schools  
Georgia Private School Accreditation Council  
Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools//Hawai'i Council of Private Schools  
Minnesota Nonpublic Education Council  
National Council of Private School Accreditation  
New Mexico Non-Public School Commission  
Oklahoma Private School Accreditation Commission  
Pennsylvania Affiliate of CAPE  
Texas Private School Accreditation Commission  
Tennessee Department of Education – Office of School Choice  
Virginia Council for Private Education  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction – Private School Choice Programs/Special Needs Scholarship Program

## **Co-Accreditation Agreements with:**

Cognia (North-Central Association, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association)  
Middle States Association-Commission on Elementary Secondary Schools  
National Council for Private School Accreditation (and affiliates)  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

## **Affiliated with:**

911 S. Parsons Ave., Suite G  
Brandon, FL 33511  
Phone (813) 684-2024

[www.actsschools.org](http://www.actsschools.org)

ACTS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its programs.

# ACTS Accreditation Process At A Glance

## Step 1:

- **Member Schools:** Ensure School Membership is active, Review Accreditation Handbook/Eligibility Checklist for potential enhancements from last self-study and site visit
- **Non-Member Schools:** Apply for Membership with ACTS then review Accreditation Handbook and Eligibility Checklist

## Step 2:

- Submit Completed Accreditation Application and Fees to ACTS Office
- ACTS Office will schedule a video meeting/phone conference to discuss the process
- If school wishes for Co-accreditation with a National accreditor, school must complete application process with that association (Cognia, MSA-CESS, NEASC, WASC)

## Step 3:

- Candidacy Visit Questionnaire Packet uploaded to G Suite Portal/Access Granted
- Team Chair Assigned and Candidacy Visit Scheduled (on site or online)
- In most cases, Readiness Visit not required for school renewing Accreditation

## Step 4:

- Accreditation Commission Review and Approval of Candidacy Visit Report
- ACTS Board of Directors Affirmation of Accreditation Commission Decision
- Once approved, School becomes Candidate for Accreditation

## Step 5:

- Self-Study Process begins, through ACTS Online G Suite Portal as Candidacy Questionnaire
- Team Chairperson will schedule the Site Visit and assist with the Self-Study process

## Step 6:

- Site Visit to school is conducted
- Team Report Completed and submitted to Accreditation Commission

## Step 7:

- Accreditation Commission Reviews Team Report for Decision
- Accreditation Commission meets three times per school year - Fall, Winter, Spring
- ACTS Board of Directors Affirmation of Accreditation Commission Decision

## Step 8:

- School awarded Accredited Status
- Valid for Six Years (unless otherwise stipulated by Local, State, National Regulations)
- Potential for Mid-Cycle Review during Year Three (Type of Review determined by Commission)

## Step 9:

- Complete Annual Continuous Accreditation Report - Due July 1 each year
- Maintain Annual Membership status - Due September 1 each year
- Sixth Year Accreditation Renewal - Refer to Step 2 - Apply for re-accreditation during Spring of Year Five to ensure no lapse in status

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
ACTS Mission, Vision, & Core Values	4
Code of Ethics for ACTS Member and Accredited Schools	
Chapter 1: Accreditation Process	5
Application for Initial Accreditation & Sixth-Year Accreditation	5
Accreditation/Candidacy Process	6
Levels of Accreditation	6
Term of Accreditation	6
Accreditation Cycle	6
Mid-Cycle Review	7
Continuous Accreditation Report	7
Substantive Change to School Program	7
Cross Organizational Accreditation Transfer	8
Co-Accreditation with Regional/National Accreditor	8
International Accreditation	8
Rejoinder to Accreditation Findings	9
Complaint Procedures	9
Visiting Team Purpose and Objectives	9
Overview of Site Visit	9
Visiting Team Expenses	10
Self-Study Process Overview	10
Background	10
Accreditation Standards and Indicators	10
Self-Study Format	10
School Purpose and School-Wide Learner Outcomes	10
Focus on Learning and School Change	10
Importance of Evidence	11
ACTS Expectations for Analysis in the Self-Study	11
Successful Completion of Self-Study	11
Self-Study Framework	12
Required and Optional Tasks Completed by Each School	12
Task 1A: School History and Demographic Study	12
Task 1B: Survey Requirements	12
Supporting Documentation for Self-Study	13
K-12 Programs that include Preschools and/or Digital Instruction	13
Chapter 2: Preschool Accreditation Standards	14
Chapter 3: K-12 Accreditation Standards	19
Chapter 4: K-12 Digital/Distance Accreditation Standards	23
Chapter 5: Florida Gold Seal Preschool Accreditation	27
Chapter 6: ACTS-WASC Accreditation Protocols	43
Appendix 1: ACTS Statement of Faith	47
Appendix 2: The General Council of the Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths	47
Appendix 3: Calvary Chapel Distinctives	47

**NOTE: All rights reserved. The Association of Christian Teachers and Schools retains full copyright ownership, rights, and protection of all material contained in this document. This document is to be used for accreditation purposes only. No part of this document may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval systems, for any other purposes without the written permission of**

# **ACTS Vision, Mission, and Core Values**

## **Mission**

Assisting Christian schools to realize the highest level of educational credibility

## **Vision**

Setting a new standard of Christ-centered academic excellence

## **Core Values**

We are passionately committed to:

- A Biblical Worldview—modeling, teaching, and leading with actions and decisions that are consistent with God's Word
- Integrity—demonstrating exemplary practices reflective of Christian ethics; with accountability to Christ, our schools, and the educational community
- Excellence—providing exceptional services for the certification and development of Christian administrators and teachers, and pathways to the highest levels of accreditation for Christian schools
- Relationship—developing and sustaining a partnership with Christian Schools to enhance their ministry through personal connection
- Creativity—being proactive in the pursuit and development of innovative solutions to benefit the growth and development of our organization and its member schools
- Service—purposing to approach current and prospective members by offering resources, support, consulting, advice, and mentoring

## CHAPTER 1: ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The purpose of the Accreditation process is to establish high, uniform standards among ACTS member schools. Achievement of accreditation status represents a standard of excellence that is recognized by other institutions and the constituency of the community in which the school is located. Accreditation requirements identify educational and spiritual criteria which establish high expectations for Christian schools. Parent/Guardians seek accredited schools because they believe such schools offer a quality program. Likewise, the larger communities of business and higher education value the standard of excellence established by school accreditation. *(NOTE: While ACTS works with Residential/Boarding schools, the ACTS Accreditation protocol focuses on the school's academic program only and does not encompass any housing options. Additionally, ACTS Accreditation of Digital/Distance Schools only applies to compulsory grade levels Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, ages 5 through 18/19 unless otherwise stipulated by state law.)*

The Accreditation process is designed to meet or exceed the minimum standards recognized by the major accrediting associations. It is important for all ACTS member schools to strive to be accredited. Only member schools may apply for accreditation. Accreditation is a continual process promoting excellence in Christian school education.

To become accredited, a school will complete a self-study evaluation and open their school to an on-site visit by a qualified team of educators who will examine its program to determine whether it is being operated within the published guidelines of the accrediting agency. ACTS standards are recognized by Regional Accrediting Agencies and are designed to meet or exceed the standards for those accrediting associations. ACTS Standards are recognized by NCPSA (National Council for Private Schools Accreditation) and numerous state agencies of non-public education.

This Accreditation Handbook (AH) is designed to guide member schools through the ACTS Accreditation Process. The information within the AH provides an administrator with understanding of the set of standards and the evaluative process that is in place to allow verification of a member school's commitment to its constituency and others that it is carrying out its Christian educational purpose. It also assists in the school in completing the *First Time Accreditation Application* and preparing the self-study, filing the *Continuous Accreditation Report*, and completing the *Sixth-Year Accreditation Renewal*.

### **APPLICATION FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION & SIXTH-YEAR ACCREDITATION**

In submitting this application to the ACTS office, you are asserting that you are a member in good standing and that you have carefully read the Accreditation Handbook and that you are requesting to become involved or to continue involvement in the accreditation process of ACTS. **The following action steps ensure a smooth application process:**

1. **Request the link to the Online Accreditation Application (Google Form) from the ACTS office.**
2. **Make \$650 payment for the application fee (Check mailed to the ACTS Office or Credit Card through the ACTS website). The application fee is non-refundable.**
3. **Ensure that everyone who will need access to the Accreditation/Self Study folder within the ACTS G-Suite has an active Gmail account.**
  - 3.1 **It is suggested that the school create a series of school-based Gmail accounts to be used for the individuals who will access the folders, instead of using personal Gmail accounts.**
  - 3.2 **Other email platforms (@yahoo.com, @msn.com, @live.com, etc.) may or may not give the full access needed to interact with the school's Accreditation Folder within the ACTS G-Suite.**
4. **If the school is seeking co-accreditation with another organization through an ACTS partnership, ensure all applications and fees are submitted to that organization (MSA, WASC, Cognia, etc.).**

An ACTS accredited school must submit a sixth-year accreditation application (including fees) prior to the beginning of its sixth year of current accreditation term. The school must complete a new/revised self-study on the ACTS Google Drive through a link supplied by the ACTS office. An on-site team visit must be completed during the sixth year of the school's current term, prior to the June 30<sup>th</sup> expiration.

## **ACCREDITATION/CANDIDACY PROCESS**

As soon as the school's accreditation application and fee are accepted, an Accreditation Candidacy Visit will be scheduled with the school. The school will demonstrate how the school meets the requirements for Accreditation Candidacy through completion of the Accreditation Candidacy Visit Questionnaire and collection/upload of supporting documents. This Questionnaire will be reviewed by the ACTS Office/Team Chair/Regional Coordinator and a meeting/site visit will be scheduled. A written report will be submitted to the Commission detailing how the school meets each of the criteria. The report will be placed in the school's file and the school will be given a copy. The school is responsible for the travel expenses of the chairperson related to this visit. Once the Accreditation Commission approves the report and the Board affirms the decision, the school moves to the Self-study phase that culminates with a site visit within 18-24 months.

## **LEVELS OF ACCREDITATION**

In the accreditation process, a school progresses from Applicant to Candidate to Accredited. A school may remain in Applicant status or Candidate status for a maximum of two years after being accepted by ACTS. If significant progress is not made toward accreditation, the school may be dropped from the accreditation process. If dropped from the accreditation process, the school must submit a new application and pay an additional application fee.

**Applicant Status:** A school begins Applicant status when an official application and fee is filed with the ACTS Office. The Commission will validate Applicants during its next meeting. A school at this stage of accreditation may only refer to themselves as being an Applicant for accreditation with ACTS.

**Candidate Status:** Once a school's Candidacy Visit has been completed and the report has been approved by the Commission and affirmed by the Board, the school will be advanced to Candidate status and assigned a chairperson as an advisor. After the school receives their formal notice that their Candidacy Visit report has been accepted, they may refer to themselves as having Candidate status with ACTS.

**Accredited Status:** Upon completion of the on-site visit, the Visiting Team will submit a report and recommendation to the Commission. The Commission then reviews the report and makes a final determination to grant (or not to grant) accreditation for six years (schools in New Mexico are limited to a five-year term). A school may refer to themselves as Accredited by ACTS upon receipt of the notice of approval by the Commission and Board. *Note: The School retains ownership of their final copy of the Accreditation Report to publish as they wish.*

**Revocation of Accreditation:** The ACTS Accreditation Commission may receive information that requires the members to assess the continued accredited status of a school. The information may include (but is not limited to) complaints, non-compliance with Accreditation standards, failure to submit required fees/documents, etc. Should the Commission make the determination to revoke a school's accreditation, the school will be notified, by certified mail, of the reasons for the pending revocation. The notified school has the right to appeal the decision to the Chief Operations Officer. Should that decision not be acceptable to the school, the school may appeal to the ACTS Board. The decision of the Board shall be final. The school will be notified of the Board's decision by certified mail. If the decision is to revoke accreditation, upon receipt of the said notification, the school must immediately stop referring to itself as an ACTS accredited school. (Note – if the school holds co-accreditation with another accrediting agency, that agency will be notified of the revocation status. Additionally, notification will be made to any other agencies that may have vested interest in the school/center)

## **TERM OF ACCREDITATION**

The initial and sixth-year accreditation term is for a maximum of six years (unless a state requires a different term). A school's accreditation term begins upon being accredited and will expire on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the sixth school year following the end of the school year in which it received its initial or sixth-year accreditation (i.e., if a school is accredited during the 2024 – 2025 SY, then the accreditation term expires on June 30, 2031).

## **ACCREDITATION CYCLE**

The accreditation process is a perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring, and reassessment (self-study, visit, and follow-up). During the year prior to the visit, a school clarifies or redefines its school-wide learner outcomes and begins the formal self-study process that assesses the actual student program with respect to the standards. The self-study process culminates in the development of a six-year School-wide Improvement Plan. The completed self-study will be made available to the Visiting Team members at least a minimum of 30 days prior to their visit. Using the results of the visit, the school modifies and implements its Improvement Plan in this ongoing cycle of improvement.

### ACTS Six-Year Cycle for Schools:

<i>Year One:</i>	Profile Update, Continuous Accreditation Report, Refinement of School-Wide Improvement Plan
<i>Year Two:</i>	Profile Update, Continuous Accreditation Report, Refinement of School-Wide Improvement Plan
<i>Year Three:</i>	Profile Update, Continuous Accreditation Report, and <b>Mid-Cycle Review (for schools with 5 or more Mostly Mets)</b> , Refinement of School-Wide Improvement Plan
<i>Year Four:</i>	Profile Update, Continuous Accreditation Report, Refinement of School-Wide Improvement Plan
<i>Year Five:</i>	Review of all Profile Data, Continuous Accreditation Report, and Program Analysis (beginning of next Self-Study), Revision of School-Wide Improvement Plan, File Sixth-Year Accreditation Application/Fee
<i>Year Six:</i>	Completion of new Self-Study, Refinement of School-Wide Improvement Plan, visit by ACTS Visiting Team, Revision of School-Wide Improvement Plan after Site Visit

### MID-CYCLE REVIEW

If, at the conclusion of the accreditation site visit and completion of the team report, a school has five or more “Mostly Met” standards (a standard with one directive is considered Mostly Met) will have a Mid Cycle Review stipulated. This review is to ensure the school has completed the directives or, in some cases, has made adequate progress in completing the directives from the most recent team report. The type of review will be determined by Accreditation Commission after review of the scope of the directives. In some cases, the review may be of specific documents by an Accreditation Team member, Commission member or the ACTS office. In some cases, the school will host a Mid-Cycle Visit of a Team member, Commission member or an ACTS staff member. If this type of review is mandated, the school must bear the cost of the visit in the same manner as an Accreditation Team Site Visit.

### CONTINUOUS ACCREDITATION REPORT (C.A.R.)

All accredited schools are required to submit a completed annual report by July 1 each year along with the annual CAR fee. This report contains relevant data pertaining to the previous school year. This report is reviewed by the Commission to determine if the school remains in compliance with the accreditation standards. (See [www.actsschools.org](http://www.actsschools.org) for forms)

### SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

A school’s accreditation is based on the evidence reviewed at the time of the site visit. If changes to the school’s program are made after accreditation is granted, those changes are to be reported to ACTS. Changes to the school’s program will have implications in the accreditation standards:

**Standard 1:** If the school completely revises/changes/modifies its mission, vision, or philosophy, then the school is required to report the change on the CAR. If, revision continues to meet the indicators, no further action necessary.

**Standard 2:** If the school makes major governance structure changes within a school year, major policy changes, or the head of the governance changes, then the school **must notify the ACTS office immediately**. If changes meet the indicators, no further action necessary. If changes are made due to malfeasance, a face-to-face meeting must take place between ACTS and the school governance. NOTE: ACTS determines if the meeting will be in person or via video conferencing platform. If in person, then the school is responsible for the travel expenses incurred.

**Standard 3:** If the school completely revises/changes its curriculum, the school must report the changes on the CAR. If, revision meets the indicators, no further action necessary. If the school makes minor changes, then report the changes on the CAR. No further action necessary.

**Standard 4:** If the school has a change of administrator and/or a majority of the faculty, the school Governance **must notify the ACTS office immediately** so a meeting between the governance and ACTS via an internet video platform to determine if a school visit is required. If in person, then the school is responsible for the travel expenses incurred. Minor changes to faculty, administration or staff are to be reported on the CAR. If the administrator is replaced outside of the school year, a face-to-face meeting must take place between ACTS and the new administrator.

**Standard 5:** If the school experiences a major financial downturn, the school is to notify the ACTS office and a face-to-face meeting between ACTS and the administrator via an internet video platform may be requested. Minor financial adjustments or new budget, then report on the CAR.

**Standard 6:** If the school makes major school facilities changes (new site, new buildings on current property, etc.), the school **must notify the ACTS office immediately** to determine if a site visit is required to ensure compliance with the standard. The school is responsible for the travel expenses incurred. Minor school facilities alterations should be reported on the CAR.

**Standard 7:** If the school makes major revisions of the admission policy, the school must report changes on the CAR. If revision meets the indicators, no further action necessary.

**Standard 8:** If a school makes changes to the record keeping process, the school must report changes on the CAR. If changes meet the indicators, no further action necessary.

**Standard 9:** If the school makes changes to the student activities, the school must report the changes on the CAR. If the changes meet the indicators, no further action is necessary.

**Standard 10:** If the school makes to the school's publications, the school must report the changes on the CAR. If the changes meet the indicators, no further action is necessary.

**Standard 11:** If the school makes changes to the school's student data analysis process, the school must report the changes on the CAR. If the changes meet the indicators, no further action is necessary.

**Standard 12:** If the school makes changes to the school's health, safety and security procedures, the school must report the change on the CAR. If the changes meet the indicators, no further action is necessary.

**NOTE:** The Accreditation Commission reserves the right to require additional courses of action if the situation warrants.

### **CROSS-ORGANIZATIONAL ACCREDITATION TRANSFER**

A school that is currently accredited by any recognized Accreditation Organization may transfer their current accreditation to ACTS with no interruption of their accredited status by completing the following process:

1. Join ACTS in Membership.
2. Have their status within the other organization validated.
3. Submit a complete application for accreditation along with the current accreditation fee.
4. Upon acceptance, submit the school's most current self-study instrument along with the latest team visit report to a designated Team Chair for review.
5. The school must host an on-site visit by the Team Chair (the length of the visit will be determined by the Director of Accreditation and the Accreditation Commission Chair).
6. The Team Chair will write and send a report of the visit to the ACTS Commission for accreditation confirmation.
7. All confirmed accreditation transfers will be valid for the school's current accreditation time frame.

### **CO-ACCREDITATION WITH REGIONAL/NATIONAL ACCREDITOR**

In addition to ACTS accreditation, a school may choose to seek co-accreditation with a Regional/National Accreditor (Cognia-SACS, Cognia-NCA, Cognia-NWA, Middle States Association, New England Association of Colleges and Schools and Western Association of Schools and Colleges). The school must complete the application process with the Regional accreditor of their choosing, independent of the ACTS application process. Additional fees required for that Regional accreditation will be the responsibility of the school, paid directly to the Regional accreditor. The process of self-study and site visit may vary depending on the choice of Regional accreditor. If there are any additional requirements stipulated by the Regional accreditor, it is the responsibility of the school to meet those requirements.

### **INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

ACTS member schools located outside the United States follow the same accreditation process to receive ACTS international accreditation. To be considered for accreditation, an international school must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction and/or country in which they are located the same as other national/domestic schools.

The international accreditation process is designed to meet or exceed the minimum standards recognized for school accreditation. However, in some situations an international school may find that compliance with one or more standards is not possible because of objectives, structure, organizational limits from local government regulations, or programs of that school. For any exception to be considered, substantial and effective documentation must be submitted, proving that the exception is warranted and that the strengths of the entire school or any single part will not be undermined by granting an exception. No routine exceptions will be granted. All requests for exceptions **must** follow the process described below.

1. Exceptions to compliance with a standard, as much as is known and is practical, should be requested at the time of candidacy.
2. Any exception to the standards of accreditation must be presented in writing to the Commission a minimum of 60 days prior to an accreditation team visit for consideration.
3. The Commission will notify the head of the school of its final decision on all requests for exceptions.



### **REJOINDER TO ACCREDITATION TEAM FINDINGS**

The school under review for potential accreditation does have the right of rejoinder to the team report if the school disagrees with the team's findings. If this is the case, the school may request a copy of the team's report and submit their concerns in writing, giving as much detail as necessary. The Commission will review both the team report and the rejoinder during the approval process. The school will be notified of the outcome of this review. If the school is not satisfied with the decision of the Commission, the decision may be appealed to the Chief Operations Officer for further review. If that review results in a similar outcome, the school can then appeal to the ACTS Executive Board. The decision of the ACTS Executive Board is final and binding.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

Occasionally, the ACTS office receives a complaint(s) concerning accredited schools. In each instance, the ACTS office begins the process of information collection from the parties involved. The complaint(s) must be submitted in writing (via Google Forms) and connect directly with an accreditation standard over which ACTS has oversight. Once the complaint is filed and properly connected to an accreditation standard, the school will be asked to respond to the complaint in writing. Both the complaint and the response are sent to the Accreditation Commission for review at their next scheduled meeting for discussion. If action is taken, the school may appeal the decision. See REVOCATION OF ACCREDITATION section for process of appeal.

## **VISITING TEAM PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary purposes of the Visiting Team in the process of accreditation are to verify the school's self-study to determine if it accurately reflects the school's programs and ministry, bring objective expertise from a variety of schools to assess the school's complete operation, and provide a written report of the school's strengths and areas of growth to the ACTS Accreditation Commission.

The Visiting Team will consist of a Team Chair and Team members (the specific number of team members is determined by the size of the school; two people is the minimum size required) who have education experience, are qualified in their field of expertise, and have received the required trainings from ACTS.

The chairperson will have served on a minimum of three accreditation visits and typically have experience as a school administrator, principal, assistant principal, college education department director/faculty member, etc. It is the responsibility of the Team Chair to be in constant communication with the candidate school concerning visit logistics, communicate with the ACTS office as necessary, coordinate Team responsibilities, and orchestrate a successful site visit.

The Visiting Team members are chosen to provide balance and competence to the evaluation. Their professional background and expertise shall include the areas of teaching, programs, curriculum, administration, finance, facilities, and community relations. Team members have experience in school administration, department head, classroom teacher, Guidance counselor, college professor, etc. When possible, the Visiting Team members are chosen from the same region or state in which the school being visited is located.

### **Overview of the Site Visit**

The Visiting Team will arrive according to the plans determined by the Team Chair and the school administration (this could be the night prior to the start of the visit or the morning of the first day of the visit, depending on travel needs). The overview below gives an example of what will occur during the three days of the site visit:

Day One: Morning meeting with school administration to discuss any questions, operational issues with the school that day (field trips, absent staff, etc.); Campus tour; review of files (student, personnel, financial, etc.); team inspection of the school facilities; document review (curriculum, handbooks, governance policies, etc.); after school meeting with school staff (without administration); Evening Governance Meeting (usually with dinner).

Day Two: Morning meeting with school administration to discuss any questions, operational issues with the school that day (field trips, absent staff, etc.); classroom observations of all teachers; Stakeholder meetings (parents, students, finance office, etc.); observations of student drop off and pick up procedures; conduct a campus emergency drill; continued review of documents, files and policies.

Day Three: Morning meeting with school administration to discuss any questions, operational issues with the school that day (field trips, absent staff, etc.); complete stakeholder meetings, if necessary, complete classroom observations, if necessary, review any items needed to complete team report; complete the team report; after school Summary Briefing of team findings with stakeholders (administration, staff, governance, parents, church members, etc.).

### **Visiting Team Expenses**

All Visiting Team member expenses (lodging, meals, travel) incurred during the visit are the responsibility of the school being visited. The school should make direct payment arrangements for lodging and meals. The mileage rate for Team Member travel is the current rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service. Other possible travel costs include airport parking, airline tickets, hired car, tolls, etc. Food expenses incurred by a Visiting Team member while traveling must also be reimbursed by the school. The Team Chairperson will collect all expense forms and communicate those directly to the school administration as early in the visit as possible so the school can make arrangements for the checks to be issued at the conclusion of the visit. Additionally, there is a Team Chair and Team Member fee that is paid directly to the Team members.

## **SELF-STUDY PROCESS OVERVIEW**

### **Background**

The accreditation process for ACTS resulted from intensive work of a collaborative group from the ACTS organization. The basic concepts addressed in this process focus upon student success in meeting the school-wide learner outcomes [i.e., what each student should know, understand and be able to do upon exit (graduation) from the school or by the time the student completes the planned program].

### **Accreditation Standards and Indicators**

The standards and indicators are research-based guidelines of systemic school improvement that address accreditation's central tenet: a school operates with a clear understanding of its purpose and focuses on student learning. The standards were developed with the assistance of numerous practicing educational leaders and theorists. The objective was to develop standards that brought attention to concepts and factors that differentiate between effective and ineffective schools. Since most formal education occurs in an institutional setting, factors that impact institutional effectiveness were considered along with curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment.

### **Self-study Format**

The Self-Study is to be completed in the ACTS Google Drive through the link supplied by the ACTS Office. The school must have a Gmail account/email address to access the drive.

### **School Purpose and School-Wide Learner Outcomes**

An essential element of systemic school improvement is the collective vision or statement of purpose on the part of the members of the school community: What should students know and be able to do upon exit from the school? What does it mean to be an educated person? What is the most effective preparation of students for the future? The purpose provides the school's foundation for establishing school-wide learner outcomes. These state the global knowledge, skills, and understanding students should possess upon exit from the school, or by the time the student completes the planned program. The attainment of these school-wide learner outcomes drives the instructional program and the support operations of the school and therefore is integral to the school's accreditation process. These learner outcomes complement the more specific curricular standards.

### **Focus on Learning and School Change**

To ensure that the critical elements of school change were integral to the design of this protocol, the following specific features are included:

- The clarification of the school's purpose and school-wide learner outcomes for all students.
- The involvement of the school community in self-directed problem-solving.
- The analysis of the actual program for students.
- The planning for meaningful dialogue.
- The necessity of collaboration and shared decision-making.
- The use of high-quality standards to analyze the program for students.
- The development of a School-Wide Improvement Plan to support desired learning results.
- The opportunity for an outside perspective regarding the proposed changes through the Visiting Team's dialogue and findings.
- The monitoring of progress in meeting or redefining goals and improvements through accreditation reviews and reports.

### **Importance of Evidence**

Translating the school's purpose into school-wide learner outcomes for all students is a beginning. The self-study phase of the accreditation process revolves around an in-depth gathering of evidence that will enable a school to take an honest look at what is and is not working based upon the standards and the school-wide learner outcomes. This verification is key to learning about the actual instruction experienced by students.

Observable evidence includes analyzing the following:

- What students are doing and producing (student work).
- Student interviews and observations.
- Hard data and information, e.g., student indicators for attendance, special needs, school-wide performance.
- Other interviews, observations, etc.

### **ACTS Expectations for Analysis in the Self-Study**

The school's self-study is predicated on five key components. Through the completion of the accreditation process, the school will have accomplished:

1. The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study.
2. The clarification of the school's purpose and the school-wide learner outcomes.
3. The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the accreditation standards and the school wide learner outcomes.
4. The development of a School-Wide Improvement Plan that integrates subject area/program and support plans to address identified growth needs.
5. The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the School-Wide Improvement Plan.

### **Successful completion of the Self-study**

**Timeline and Accountability:** The school's leadership and self-study coordinator establish: 1) a general calendar for the major self-study events; and 2) a more detailed timeline of specific committee meetings and tasks to be accomplished. The self-study coordinator should work backwards from the date of the visit to ensure the self-study is completed 30 days prior to the team's arrival.

**Focus Group/Task Forces/Committees:** Create a structure of collaboration between all stakeholders to ensure the entire school body is represented in the self-study process. A typical committee structure includes three types: 1) subject area/stakeholder groups; 2) interdisciplinary Focus Groups or school-wide groups; and 3) the Leadership Team. Each level of responsibility serves a different function. The Leadership Team coordinates the entire process and synthesizes findings into a workable school wide Improvement plan.

**Post-visit Follow-up:** After completion of the site visit, the school should annually refine and implement the School-Wide Improvement Plan, including Directives stipulated on the Team Report. The Leadership Team coordinates this implementation, annually reviews progress, and refines the "next steps" in meeting the goals. All follow-up is done with respect to evidence that students are accomplishing the established school-wide learner outcomes. The governing authority is involved in the ongoing improvement process to ensure that the follow-up process is integral to planning and goal setting and documents progress on the Continuous Accreditation Report.

## SELF-STUDY FRAMEWORK

Each school will complete the following Tasks:

- Task 1A: School History and Demographic Study
- Task 1B: Stakeholder Survey Data Collection
- Task 2A: Accreditation Standards and Indicators
  - Chapter 2 – Preschool/Early Childhood Education
  - Chapter 3 – Grade K through 12
  - Chapter 4 – Grades K through 12 with PreK and/or Digital Addendums
  - Chapter 5 – K12 Digital/Distance Education
  - Chapter 6 – Florida Gold Seal – Preschool Only
  - Chapter 7 – ACTS/WASC Cooperative Accreditation

The following Tasks are only completed by schools seeking to add or renew a separate division to a K12 Accreditation.

- Task 2B: PreK/Early Childhood Education Addendum Standards
- Task 2C: Digital Distance Education Addendum Standards

The following Task only applies to schools that are renewing a current ACTS accreditation or are migrating an accreditation term from another agency.

- Task 3: Completion of Previous Directives

**NOTE: If a school is completing the Accreditation Process with only one Standards Protocol, see the chapter on that particular Protocol.**

### **Task 1A: School History and Demographic Study (for all schools/self-study processes)**

**History:** Describe the formation of the school, mission, vision, core values, and purpose

**Current School Leadership:** Head of School, Other members of Administration, Office Staff members, School Board Members

#### **Community Demographics:**

- What is the makeup of the general population of your surrounding community?
- What is the economic status of your surrounding community?
- What other educational opportunities (similar to your school/center) are in your surrounding community?
- What are the major issues unique to your area (social, economical, educational, etc.)?

#### **Current Student Data:**

- Currently, how many students at each age/grade level are enrolled at the school/center?
- Over the last three years, what has been the school's total enrollment each year and enrollment per grade level?
- Over the last three years, what percentage of that year's student body re-enrolled for the next school year?
- What is the total percentage of each ethnicity represented at the school/center?
- What is the percentage of male to female students at your school/center?
- What student assistance programs does the school participate in? (Title 1, VPK, School Readiness, Federal Food Programs, State Scholarship/Voucher Programs/Opportunity Scholarship, etc.)
- Does the school offer Dual Enrollment options for High School students?
  - If yes, how many students participate in the program?
  - If yes, are the classes taken on your campus, at a nearby college campus, or online?
- Does the school offer a la carte courses for non-traditional students (i.e. Homeschool, Credit Recovery, etc.)?
- Does the school offer any type of Vocational Education, Internships, Apprenticeship Programs?
- Does the school participate in any type of International Student program?

- If yes, how many students participate in the program?
- If yes, what countries are represented?
- What Missions opportunities does the school provide for students (any and/or all grade levels)?
- If your school is sponsored by a church, what percentage of your student enrollment attend the sponsoring church?

**Student Follow-up Data (If Applicable):**

- For the past three years, show percentages for students' activity after Graduation in each of the following areas: US Military Service, Work Force, Trade Schools/Technical Colleges, Community College, Four-year Colleges/Universities.
- List all trade schools/technical colleges, community colleges, four-year college/universities, and branch of Military service attended/joined for the past three years.

**Task 1B: Survey Requirements**

Data collection from stakeholders is vital to the overall analysis of a school's program. Surveys allow the stakeholder to respond with candor, honest opinion, and freedom to remain anonymous. All surveys will be completed via Google Form through a link sent by the ACTS Office that will populate to the Accreditation Team's folder for analysis and summary. The Google Link for the Staff/Governance Survey will be sent from the ACTS office. Complete the spreadsheet within the Evidence Folder with names, job titles and email addresses for school staff and board members. The Google Link for the Parent/Guardian Survey will be sent to the Director/Head of school to be sent to the parents/guardians. In the event email is not the best option, the administrator, the Team Chair, and the ACTS office will determine the best option for data collection. Responses from the Survey will be provided to the early childhood program administration with a summary included in the final evaluation report.

**Survey One: School Staff/Governance**

All school staff and governance members are expected to work closely with the administration in the ongoing efforts to ensure collaboration and good relations that will promote a high-quality educational program. Through this survey, all are given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the program and work environment.

**Survey Two: Parents/Guardians**

All parents/legal guardians of students enrolled in the school are given the opportunity to complete a survey in which they are asked to evaluate the quality of the program.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:**

Evidence to support the school's response to the accreditation standards is vital to the overall reliability of the process. A list of the documents that is expected to be uploaded (as a minimum) will be provided as part of the Self-Study Folder. Ensure the documents uploaded are the most current and accurate. **Note: This list changes regularly, depending on the current trends and requirements of various agencies. The documents used in a previous self-study may or may not be required still, and new documents could have been added.**

**K-12 Programs that include Preschools and/or Digital Instruction:**

Schools that operate a combination of programs (Preschool, K-12, and/or Digital/Distance) will be given the opportunity to complete a Combined Self-study that uses the K-12 Standards as the base framework. Each additional program (Preschool and/or Digital/Distance) standards are then added as additional programs of the K12 school. This enables the school to avoid redundancy while focusing on key industry standards for the unique learning styles of Early Education and Digital/Distance Education.

## CHAPTER 2: PRESCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

**For each Indicator, review and analyze how the school program/operations/policies fit with the expectations the indicator: If the expectations of the indicator are met, summarize how the school is meeting the expectations.; If the expectations of the indicator are mostly met or are not met, explain how the school will meet the expectations, including resources, timeframe, and needed logistics.**

### **Standard 1: Philosophy**

- 1.1 Shall be in agreement with an approved ACTS Statement of Faith.
- 1.2 Shall be sensitive to the needs of the children, both spiritually and academically.
- 1.3 Shall be in written form and approved by the preschool's governing body.
- 1.4 Shall be stated in preschool literature informing staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), children, and prospective families of the preschool's philosophy.
- 1.5 Shall be used to guide the academic program and overall development of the preschool and shall be consistent with sound early childhood educational practices.

### **Standard 2: Governance**

- 2.1 Shall be spiritual leaders.
- 2.2 Shall govern the preschool in accordance with the stated philosophy.
- 2.3 Shall be responsible for the formulation of policy and the maintenance of a preschool policy manual which must include nondiscriminatory policy and practices in admissions, employment, and all other aspects of preschool operation. A complete and current record of all governing body minutes must be maintained.
- 2.4 Shall be responsible for the successful operation of the preschool.
- 2.5 Shall provide adequate salary and benefits for the staff and faculty (As stated in salary scale.).
- 2.6 Shall develop and document Preschool-Wide Improvement Plan containing goals, measurable objectives, timeline for improving the preschool that address the areas of: Curriculum & Instruction, Preschool Staff, Facilities, Family and Community Relations, Directives from the previous site visit, and other Self-identified areas of needed improvement. (Minimum six-year plan).
- 2.7 Shall ensure all required governmental regulations are met (Incorporation, Fire, Health, Food Service, Human Resources, State and/or Local Early Childhood Education Rules/Regulations, etc.).
- 2.8 Shall ensure the school carries sufficient insurance and ACTS is listed as an "Additionally Insured" on the school's liability policy.
- 2.9 Shall be responsible for the selection and evaluation of the preschool administrator/director.

### **Standard 3: Curriculum and Instruction**

- 3.1 Shall be consistent with the preschool's philosophy.
- 3.2 Shall incorporate a biblical worldview into each subject area.
- 3.3 Shall be in written form, based on knowledge of child development and designed to meet individual needs by using appropriate assessment tools and allowing teachers flexibility to adapt lesson plans.
- 3.4 Shall provide appropriate teacher planning and preparation time.
- 3.5 Shall be formally and systematically evaluated by the preschool and revised as needed.
- 3.6 Shall reflect acknowledgment of differences in children and shows God's love for people of each race, color, and sex.

- 3.7 Shall incorporate developmentally appropriate materials and equipment available for all ages enrolled in the preschool. (Minimum Requirements for Compliance: Infant rooms include age-appropriate toys such as balls, pop beads, nesting cups, cuddly toys pictures, teething rings, rattles, squeak toys, and books. Toddler rooms include age-appropriate toys such as push and pull toys, stacking toys, cubes, puzzles, play phones, dolls and toys listed above. Preschool rooms include age-appropriate toys such as include puzzles, manipulatives, blocks, music, creative art, sand and water table, dolls, and other props for home living and role play. Kindergarten rooms include age-appropriate toys such as centers play materials and equipment, plus self-correcting activities for children to use independently.)
- 3.8 Shall meet the intellectual needs of each child. (Minimum Requirements for Compliance: Receptive and expressive language experiences, appropriate to development of children, are provided throughout the day; Opportunities are provided for supervised exploration and experimentation that develop cognitive skills; Media programs serve as special events rather than a significant part of the everyday program; Previewed programs are appropriate to age/attention span and enhance the concept and values of the preschool.)
- 3.9 Shall meet the physical needs of each child. (Minimum Requirements for Compliance: Classes should be given time and space for outside play on a daily basis, weather permitting; Outside play equipment and experiences shall be appropriate for the age and number of children using the playground; Curriculum will provide for hand-eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills.)
- 3.10 Shall meet the social needs of each child. (Minimum Requirements for Compliance: Develop age-appropriate rules and consequences for each group; With Christ as our example, pro-social techniques are encouraged in developing cooperation, taking turns, sharing, and problem-solving; Interactive discipline procedures such as redirection, reflective listening, and positive reinforcement are encouraged.)
- 3.11 Shall meet the emotional needs of each child. (Minimum Requirements for Compliance: The curriculum includes activities that enhance esteem for self and others and promote children's emotional growth; Staff members demonstrate love and respect for each child and interact often with children by showing interest, warmth, consideration, and affection [Staff speak to children in a loving, friendly, and courteous tone; Staff are available to individual children and responsive to their needs; Staff encourage self-help skills in children; Creative art and musical experiences are reflected in the curriculum]; The sound of the environment is primarily marked by pleasant conversation, spontaneous laughter, and exclamations of excitement rather than harsh, stressful noise or enforced quiet.)
- 3.12 Shall meet the spiritual needs of each child. (Evidence of Compliance: Christian values and principles are prevalent across disciplines and are interwoven throughout each day's activities in an age-appropriate manner; Worship songs, prayer, and Scripture verses are integrated into daily routines and activities; Bible stories are presented as truth and are taught in ways appropriate to the children's developmental levels; Biblical principles are implemented for conflict resolution, guidance, and discipline; Through words and actions, staff members serve as Christian role models.)

#### **Standard 4: Preschool Staff**

- 4.1 All members of the preschool staff shall be Christian and shall exhibit Christian character in all areas of life.
- 4.2 All preschool personnel (full/part time staff or any volunteers) are required to undergo background check prior to their employment or being given access to children, and all new staff members will serve a probationary employment period to ascertain their competence in working with children.
- 4.3 All preschool staff who are in charge of a group of children must have an ACTS Preschool Certificate. In cases where staff members do not meet the specific qualifications, a training plan, both individualized and program wide, has been developed and is being implemented for those staff members. NOTE – Centers/Preschools must comply with state and local requirements for Preschool staff/supervision as well.
- 4.4 Members of the teaching staff are involved in regularly scheduled professional development or continuing education programs for a minimum of 10 documented hours of professional development annually and must have a professional development plan on file with evidence that the program is being implemented.
- 4.5 Preschool Staff/child ratios are in compliance with state standards. Recommended ratios are: Birth – 12 Months: 1 Staff to 4 children; 12 – 23 Months: 1 Staff to 6 children; 2 year olds: 1 Staff to 8 children; 3 year olds: 1 Staff to 10 children; 4 year olds: 1 Staff to 12 children; 5 year olds: 1 Staff to 16 children; and, 5 year olds/K: 1 Staff to 20 children.
- 4.6 The preschool support staff shall be sufficient in number as to provide adequate clerical assistance.

- 4.7 The preschool's governing body shall appoint a full-time person as the chief administrator/director and who shall be on the full-time preschool staff and functioning in that capacity. If the administrator/director does not hold a undergraduate or graduate degree in Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Development, the preschool governing body must employ a person who does hold that degree to consult as the resident expert in areas of curriculum design, child development and professional development of staff members. In cases where the preschool is unable to hire a staff member who holds the proper degree(s), a professional development plan must be created for the administrator/director, with evidence of progression to meeting the required qualifications.
- 4.8 The administrative staff shall show evidence of continued professional growth by documented participation in the preschool's professional development program and/or college or continuing education credit.
- 4.9 The chief administrator/director seeks to provide spiritual leadership to the staff and children in fulfilling the spiritual mission of the preschool.
- 4.10 The chief administrator/director shall oversee all executive functions including compliance with governmental regulations, public relations, financial responsibilities, parent education and relations, building and equipment maintenance, staff recruiting, supervision, and employee relations.
- 4.11 The chief administrator/director and lead preschool staff of each preschool shall attend an ACTS conference on an annual basis.
- 4.12 The preschool shall establish a formal and systematic process of faculty/staff evaluation which shall be conducted on a periodic basis and properly documented.
- 4.13 The preschool shall publish a faculty/personnel handbook which shall include: a statement of nondiscrimination, philosophy of the preschool, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, personnel evaluation policies, and a policy statement of due process and grievance procedures.

#### **Standard 5: Finances**

- 5.1 Shall provide evidence of an external financial review (as a minimum) the year prior to an accreditation team visit (or must comply with any state mandated requirements), sound, professional, ethical, and legal practices in all financial operations. (Note: External is defined as an accounting practice/firm that has no affiliation with the school, its employees, or students.)
- 5.2 Shall present evidence of adequate and identifiable financial resources and records to operate the preschool's program with a realistic annual operating budget approved by the governing body and reviewed regularly.
- 5.3 Shall document all fundraising and resource development activities.
- 5.4 Shall publish a tuition and fee schedule that includes a tuition refund policy.

#### **Standard 6: Admission Procedures and Policies**

- 6.1 Shall be clearly written in a parent/guardian handbook.
- 6.2 Shall be formulated by the governing body.
- 6.3 Shall be written in such a manner as to admit only those for whom the program is designed.
- 6.4 Shall contain a published policy of non-discrimination and demonstrate consistent adherence.
- 6.5 Shall address financial and other contractual arrangements between the preschool and parents/guardians.

#### **Standard 7: Records**

- 7.1 Records shall be kept in a safe, secure, and professional manner (fireproof or electronically current, retrievable dual backed format).
- 7.2 Children records shall be kept on each child enrolled in the preschool, in a professional manner, and updated on a regular basis.
- 7.3 Children records shall include health and other required information (Birth Certificate, Academic (as needed), Discipline (kept up to date), Medical Records, Custody documents (if applicable), registration forms, and state required documents).
- 7.4 Access to children's records shall follow the provisions of all local, state, and federal regulations relating to an individual's right to privacy.



- 7.5 Personnel records shall be kept in a professional manner, and include transcripts, contracts, tax/employment records, Form I-9, evaluations, professional licenses, professional development, and evidence that staff are qualified, competent, and meet legal requirements for the position held.

**Standard 8: Family and Community Relations**

- 8.1 Parent Handbook: All parent(s)/guardian(s) shall receive a handbook that is true, accurate and reflect ethical guidelines, describes how the preschool functions on a day-to-day basis, including but not limited to the philosophy of child development, discipline techniques, and policies regarding holidays, illnesses, hours, fees, refunds, enrollment, termination, a policy statement of due process and grievance procedures, and contains a statement of non-discrimination.
- 8.2 Weekly or monthly communications are sent to parent(s)/guardian(s) as a regular means of communication.
- 8.3 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) conferences are held at least once a year and at other times as needed to discuss the child's progress, care, and education. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are encouraged to participate in the goal setting process for their child.
- 8.4 The Administration assists the staff with methods of recording their observations of children. Observation records are used for curriculum planning and parent conferences.
- 8.5 Significant changes in a child's physical or emotional state are reported to parent(s)/guardian(s) immediately, are documented, and are placed in the child's file.
- 8.6 The Administration is familiar with and makes appropriate use of community services and resources including social services, mental and physical health agencies, and educational programs such as museums, libraries, and other professional sources.
- 8.7 Policies concerning parental/guardian involvement such as visiting, observing, and volunteering are in place to ensure a bonding relationship between the home and preschool is maintained.

**Standard 9: Health, Safety and Security**

- 9.1 The board of directors and all other preschool personnel shall demonstrate a commitment to the physical health and safety of the children in their charge, by ensuring the preschool is safe and in current compliance with all federal, state, and local required inspections (i.e. Fire, Sprinkler, Extinguisher, Health, Food Services, Blood-Borne Pathogens training, etc.).
- 9.2 The preschool shall have policies that ensure the security of the children and staff (i.e. secured facilities, access to children, release of children, and mandatory reporting procedures for suspected child abuse according to state law).
- 9.3 Each adult is free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's health. Pre-employment physical examinations and tuberculosis tests shall be on file (if required by the state).
- 9.4 Suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect are reported in accordance with state law. Risk prevention policies are in place. All reported incidents are well documented and maintained in a confidential file.
- 9.5 The program has a written policy specifying limitations on attendance of sick children and staff. The preschool provides an area where sick children are isolated while awaiting pick up by an authorized individual.
- 9.6 Staff are alert to the health, medical incidents, and problems of each child and each are recorded and reported to staff personnel and parent(s)/guardian(s) and have at least one staff member who is certified in CPR and First Aid is present at all times.
- 9.7 The preschool/center shall have a Crisis Management Plan, to include as a minimum: Evacuation Plans; Lock-Down Procedures; Active Shooter Procedures; Natural Disaster Responses; Grief Counseling (death of a child/staff); Media Communications Policy; Emergency Contact Numbers; and an Uninhabitable Building Plan (i.e., secondary location to conduct school following loss of the use of the preschool building).

**Standard 10: Food Service and Facilities**

- 10.1 The nutritional needs of children are met in a manner that promotes physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- 10.2 Food Service furniture and utensils are suitable for each group of children.

- 10.3 Adult supervision is required: One adult sits with children at meals; Infants are held in an inclined position while bottle feeding.
- 10.4 The physical environment of the program provides sufficient lighting, good ventilation, comfortable temperature, and appropriate administrative space.
- 10.5 Classrooms are suitable for the age and activities of the children in the program. Floor space meets or exceeds a minimum of thirty-five square feet (or state-mandated requirements) of usable space per child.
- 10.6 Classrooms are clean, well maintained, age appropriately furnished and arranged not only to stimulate learning by accommodating large and small groups of children but also to encourage exploration and experimentation.
- 10.7 Children are provided with individual spaces, such as cubbies, in which they can store their work and personal belongings.
- 10.8 Drinking water is adequately provided to the children as regulated by civil authorities.
- 10.9 Sinks and toilets are readily accessible to children. The number of sinks and toilets (child-sized ones are recommended) must be in compliance with civil authorities and adequate for the number of children in attendance and contain soap and paper towels accessible to the children.
- 10.10 The diapering area is in good repair and is sanitized after each use, and soiled diapers are stored in a sealed container. Gloves as well as running water and soap for hand washing are accessible and utilized by the staff during diapering.
- 10.11 Outdoor facilities shall be able to accommodate the children's various play activities; the outdoor physical environment includes seventy-five square feet (or state-mandated requirements) per child on the playground at any given time. Children are supervised at all times, maintaining appropriate child-adult ratios.
- 10.12 Playground equipment is varied and sufficient for the number of children on the playground at the same time. The playground is designed and equipped to provide optimal learning experiences for children.
- 10.13 The program provides adequate protection for the play area, including fencing and a balance of sun and shade.
- 10.14 Wood chips, sand, and other cushioning materials of recommended depths are used under equipment such as swings and climbing apparatus, as recommended by civil authorities or national playground safety standards.
- 10.15 Through routine inspections and resulting timely repairs, the outdoor play area is well maintained to prevent children from being injured by broken equipment, sharp edges, and rusty parts.
- 10.16 There is a process in place that ensures proper maintenance of the buildings, grounds, and equipment.

## CHAPTER 3: K-12 ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

**For each Indicator, review and analyze how the school program/operations/policies fit with the expectations the indicator: If the expectations of the indicator are met, summarize how the school is meeting the expectations.; If the expectations of the indicator are mostly met or are not met, explain how the school will meet the expectations, including resources, timeframe, and needed logistics.**

### **Standard 1: Educational Philosophy and Objectives**

- 1.1 The School's Educational Philosophy and Objectives shall be in agreement with an approved ACTS Statement of Faith.
- 1.2 The School's Educational Philosophy and Objectives shall be sensitive to the needs of the pupils, both spiritually and academically.
- 1.3 The School's Educational Philosophy and Objectives shall be in written form and approved by the school's governing body.
- 1.4 The School's Educational Philosophy and Objectives shall be stated in school literature informing staff, parents, pupils, and prospective families of the school's philosophy.
- 1.5 The School's Educational Philosophy and Objectives shall be used to guide the academic program and overall development of the school and shall be consistent with sound educational practices.

### **Standard 2: Governance**

- 2.1 The School's Governance shall be spiritual leaders.
- 2.2 The School's Governance shall govern the school in accordance with the stated philosophy.
- 2.3 The School's Governance shall be responsible for the successful operation of the school through the formulation and maintenance of a school policy manual that details all school policies/practices, which must also include a nondiscriminatory policy and practices in admissions and employment, and all other aspects of school operations.
- 2.4 The School's Governance shall maintain a current and complete record of all governing body meeting minutes.
- 2.5 The School's Governance shall provide adequate salary and benefits for the staff and faculty. (As stated in salary scale.)
- 2.6 The School's Governance shall develop and document a continuous, six-year School Improvement Plan containing goals, measurable objectives, and a timeline for improving the school that addresses the areas of Curriculum & Instruction, School Staff, Facilities, Student Activities, Student Data Analysis, Directives from the previous site visit and other self-identified areas of needed improvement.
- 2.7 The School's Governance shall ensure all required government regulations are met (Incorporation, Fire, Health, Food Services, Human Resources, Education Rules/Requirements, etc.).
- 2.8 The School's Governance shall ensure the school carries sufficient insurance and ACTS is listed as an "Additionally Insured" on the school's liability policy.
- 2.9 The School's Governance shall be responsible for the selection and evaluation of the full-time school administrator.

### **Standard 3: Curriculum and Instruction**

- 3.1. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall be consistent with the school's educational philosophy and objectives.
- 3.2. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall incorporate a biblical worldview shaping instruction into each subject area.
- 3.3. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide appropriate learning experiences that address student needs as determined by a formal assessment program that includes but is not limited to nationally normed standardized testing. *(Note: If State regulations and/or Scholarship funding requirements dictate specific grade level/subject testing, the school must comply with those expectations.)*
- 3.4. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.
- 3.5. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide and coordinate services that support the unique learning needs of students.

- 3.6. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide a comprehensive curriculum map (including publishers/other materials used), scope & sequence, unit-based guides, and daily lesson plans for each subject taught.
- 3.7. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide appropriate curriculum materials for the student population.
- 3.8. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall be systematically evaluated by the school and revised as needed, in accordance with a written policy.
- 3.9. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide class information detailing educational objectives, instructional methods, classroom expectations, learning outcomes, and assessment practices.
- 3.10. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall be designed in the best interests of the students and shall have a minimum of 180 actual days or a minimum of 170 actual school days and the hourly equivalent of 180 actual school days: Kindergarten - 540 net instructional hours; Grades 1-3 - 720 net instructional hours; Grades 4-12 - 900 net instructional hours (NOTE: If the state requires an actual number of attendance days, the school must meet state requirements.)
- 3.11. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide for appropriate teacher planning and preparation time.
- 3.12. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide curriculum including subjects which constitute a well-balanced educational program and meet or exceed required state graduation requirements.
- 3.13. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall teach Bible as an academic subject at every grade level with a minimum of three hours of instructional time per week.
- 3.14. The School's Curriculum and Instruction shall provide and catalog library/media resources that include current, adequate reference, print, non-print materials, books, and technology for the needs of students.
- 3.15. The School's use of Media/Technology shall implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.

**Standard 4: School Staff**

- 4.1. All members of the school staff and volunteers shall be Christian and shall exhibit Christian character in all areas of life.
- 4.2. All school personnel (full/part time staff or any volunteers with unsupervised student contact) are required to undergo a criminal background check (fingerprint based as required by state law) and verified with the state's Child Abuse and Neglect Registry (as required by state law) prior to their employment or being given access to students.
- 4.3. Administration and Teaching Staff shall be "highly qualified" for the position they have been assigned to (Highly qualified could be defined as holding a college degree, teaching experience, special skill set, alternative career pathways other than education, etc.). Additionally, each teaching staff member (core subject/grade levels & any High School credit-bearing course) are required to hold an ACTS Educator Certificate, completing the stipulations of the Certificate each term.
- 4.4. All School Staff (Administration, Teachers, Support, etc.) shall deal professionally with students, parents, and fellow colleagues.
- 4.5. The Teaching staff shall be sufficient in number to assure a faculty-pupil ratio that is appropriate to the type of curriculum used.
- 4.6. The Support staff shall be sufficient in number as to provide adequate clerical assistance to the school.
- 4.7. The school shall provide a Custodial Staff sufficient to maintain a clean and safe environment.
- 4.8. The school shall provide adequate and competent staffing or an auxiliary plan/system that meets these service needs/areas - student health services, guidance services, food services, transportation services, etc. (specifically if required by state and local law/regulations).
- 4.9. The school shall establish a written systematic process of faculty/staff evaluation which shall be conducted on an annual basis.
- 4.10. The school shall provide for a formal systematic process of annual staff development (continuing education units through conferences, webinars, continuing college coursework, etc.) and provide evidence/documentation of participation of school administration, faculty, and staff.
- 4.11. New Staff onboarding policies and procedures support the school's values, beliefs, and educational practices.
- 4.12. Ongoing peer mentoring/collaboration supports continued growth consistent with the school's values, beliefs, and educational practices.

- 4.13. The school administration provides and/or coordinates services that support community relations, counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.

#### **Standard 5: Finances**

- 5.1 The School's finances shall provide evidence of an external compilation financial review (as a minimum) the year prior to an accreditation team visit (or must comply with any state mandated requirements), sound, professional, ethical, and legal practices in all financial operations. (Note: External is defined as an accounting practice/firm that has no affiliation with the school, its employees, or students.)
- 5.2 The School's finances shall present evidence of adequate and identifiable financial resources and records to operate the school's program with a realistic annual operating budget approved by the governing body and reviewed regularly.
- 5.3 The School shall document all fundraising and resource development activities.
- 5.4 The School shall publish a tuition and fee schedule that includes a tuition refund policy.

#### **Standard 6: School Facilities**

- 6.1 The School's Facilities shall be adequate in size, furniture, and equipment for the type of school program offered and for the size of the enrollment.
- 6.2 The School's Facilities shall be clean and meet all pertinent building and other legal requirements.
- 6.3 The School's Facilities shall have clean, sanitary, and regularly inspected kitchen and dining areas and comply with all legal requirements (if food service is offered).
- 6.4 The School's Outdoor Facilities (including playgrounds, athletic fields, outdoor classrooms, etc.) are inspected regularly, well-maintained, and are adequate to meet the specified activity.

#### **Standard 7: Admission Policies and Procedures**

- 7.1 The School's Admission's Policies and Procedures shall be formulated and approved by the school governance and adhere to state guidelines (if applicable) on the age of students enrolled at Kindergarten and/or First Grade levels.
- 7.2 The School's Admission's Policies and Procedures shall be clearly written in such a manner as to admit only those for whom the program is designed.
- 7.3 The School's Admission's Policies and Procedures shall contain a published policy of non-discrimination and demonstrate consistent adherence.
- 7.4 The School's Admission's Policies and Procedures shall address all financial arrangements between the school and parents/students.

#### **Standard 8: Records**

- 8.1 All records shall be kept in a safe, secure, and professional manner in either a fireproof cabinet or in an electronic, digital format that is both current and retrievable from dual back-ups.
- 8.2 Student records shall be kept on each student enrolled in the school, updated on a regular basis, meet all state-specific requirements, and include academic, health, discipline, and other necessary information.
- 8.3 The School shall have a policy and procedure for the permanent discontinuation of academic services/operations, which includes the location of permanent storage and retrieval of school records (staff, student and financial - in accordance with best practices and state law), an identified custodian of those records, a list of all documents required to be permanently maintained, a procedure for communication with all stakeholders (current and former school staff & students, the ACTS Office), dissolution of the 501c3 (if applicable) and communication plan for state agencies (Department of Education, Department of State, etc.).
- 8.4 Access to student records shall follow the provisions of all local, state, and federal regulations relating to an individual's right to privacy.
- 8.5 Personnel records shall be kept for all school employees, and must include contracts, job descriptions, tax records, form I-9, performance evaluations, professional development, ACTS certification/transcripts (administrators/teachers), and any other documents required by the local/state authorities.

#### **Standard 9: Student Activities**

- 9.1 All School Student Activities shall be consistent with the school's philosophy and objectives.
- 9.2 All School Student Activities shall be controlled by the school administration.
- 9.3 All School Student Activities shall be staffed by personnel carefully selected on the basis of applicable background and training.

- 9.4 All School Student Activities shall be adequate in nature and type for the size of the school's enrollment and grade level.
- 9.5 Competitive Athletics: shall adhere to all requirements of any/all leagues (sanctioned or otherwise) and comply with local, state, and national guidelines/requirements.

**Standard 10: Publications**

- 10.1 All School Publications shall contain a statement of non-discrimination.
- 10.2 All School Publications shall be true, accurate, and reflect ethical guidelines.
- 10.3 The School shall have a student handbook that informs students and parents of the school's philosophy, programs and contain information concerning attendance policies (in accordance with state requirements), guidance services, health services, transportation, food services, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, a policy statement of due process and grievance procedures, graduation requirements, grading scales, policies and procedures for promotion and retention of students, and policies pertaining to the proper and safe use of the Internet.
- 10.4 The School shall publish a faculty and personnel handbook which shall include the following: philosophy of the school, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, grading/assessment, policies and procedures for promotion and retention of students, personnel evaluation policies, policy/procedure statements of due process and grievance, and policies pertaining to the proper and safe use of the Internet.
- 10.5 Schools that have teams engaging in sanctioned/unsanctioned athletic competition shall publish an Athletic Handbook that includes (as a minimum) the program's philosophy and purpose, student-athlete eligibility, sportsmanship expectations, team communications, student-athlete transportation for games/practices, boosters/fundraising, injury protocols/reporting (concussions, broken bones, heat-induced illness, etc.), procedures to participate (physicals, forms, fees, uniforms, equipment, etc.), anti-hazing policy, and any other league/state requirements.

**Standard 11: Student Data Analysis**

- 11.1 The Staff engages in the creation and implementation of learning goals that have been formulated based on student data points (norm-reference testing, formal/informal assessments, portfolios, etc.).
- 11.2 The Staff engages in continual analysis of the student data points, the established learning goals/objectives with measurable and verifiable benchmarks, and changes to intervention programs, curriculum, etc. are made accordingly.
- 11.3 The Staff engages in annual professional development specifically designed on best practices of data interpretation, creation of learning goals and benchmarks, evaluation of programs, and the implementation of interventions.
- 11.4 The Staff engages in comprehensive communication of the established learning goals, individual student progress, and academic interventions with all relevant stakeholders.

**Standard 12: Health, Safety, and Security**

- 12.1 The school shall be safe and are in current compliance with all federal, state, and local required inspections (i.e. Fire, Sprinkler, Extinguisher, Health, Food Service, Sprinkler, Blood-borne Pathogen training, CPR/First Aid/AED Training, etc.).
- 12.2 The school shall have policies that ensure the security of the students and staff (i.e. secured facilities, access to students, release of students, and mandatory reporting procedures for suspected child abuse according to state law.)
- 12.3 The school shall have a Crisis Management Plan, to include as a minimum: Evacuation Plans; Lock-Down Procedures; Active Threat Procedures, Natural disaster Responses; Grief Counseling (death of student/staff); Media Communications Policy; Concussion protocols/procedures; Medication storage and administration procedures; Suicide prevention awareness training and procedures; Bullying/Harassment prevention and mitigation policies/procedures; Emergency Contact Numbers; and an Uninhabitable Building Plan (Secondary Location)/Remote Learning procedures.
- 12.4 The school shall conduct drills in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations (fire, lockdown, active shooter, tornado, etc.).
- 12.5 The school shall provide consistent supervision of all students during the school day and all related activities. (including drop-off and pick-up, before and after school extracurricular activities/athletics).
- 12.6 The school shall have policies, procedures, and regulations, in accordance with federal, state, and local laws, designed to safeguard students while being transported in school/church owned vehicles (or private vehicles being used for school trips).

## CHAPTER 4: K-12 DIGITAL/DISTANCE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

**For each Indicator, review and analyze how the school program/operations/policies fit with the expectations the indicator: If the expectations of the indicator are met, summarize how the school is meeting the expectations.; If the expectations of the indicator are mostly met or are not met, explain how the school will meet the expectations, including resources, timeframe, and needed logistics.**

### **Standard 1: Philosophy**

- 1.1 Shall be in agreement with an approved ACTS Statement of Faith.
- 1.2 Shall be sensitive to the needs of the pupils, both spiritually and academically.
- 1.3 Shall be in written form and approved by the school's governing body.
- 1.4 The online service provider has a clearly stated mission that communicates a shared purpose and direction and guides the services it provides to others.
- 1.5 The mission and goals of the online service provider are clearly articulated to stakeholders.
- 1.6 Shall be used to guide the academic program and overall development of the school and shall be consistent with sound educational practices.
- 1.7 The online service provider examines and evaluates its mission goals regularly.

### **Standard 2: Governance**

- 2.1 Shall be spiritual leaders.
- 2.2 Establishes a governance structure that is consistent with and supports the mission of the organization.
- 2.3 Has clearly defined roles for each level of governance, ie., board, executive, administration, leadership, etc.
- 2.4 Shall be responsible for the formulation of policy and the maintenance of a school policy manual which must include nondiscriminatory policy and practices in admissions, employment, and all other aspects of school operation. A complete and current record of all governing body minutes must be maintained.
- 2.5 Shall be incorporated.
- 2.6 The online service provider assures adequate human resources, technology, physical plant facilities, and budget to support its mission and goals.
- 2.7 Shall provide adequate salary and benefits for the staff and faculty.
- 2.8 Long-range planning, budgeting and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, professional development, student data analysis, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education curricula offered through, or supported by, the organization. (minimum six-year plan)
- 2.9 Shall ensure all required governmental regulations are met in the state where the student receives services.
- 2.10 Shall be responsible for the selection and evaluation of the school administration.
- 2.11 Provisions are made for protection of confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information.

### **Standard 3: Curriculum and Instruction**

- 3.1. Shall be consistent with the school's philosophy.
- 3.2. Shall incorporate a biblical worldview into each subject area.
- 3.3. Shall provide appropriate learning experiences that address student needs as determined by a formal assessment program that includes but is not limited to normed standardized testing.
- 3.4. Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning.
- 3.5. Shall provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.
- 3.6. Shall provide curriculum guides detailing scope and sequence for the instructional program at each grade level.

- 3.7. All online/distance courses have the same academic rigor compared to the same course offered in a traditional face-to-face classroom.
- 3.8. Programs and courses are developed by academically qualified persons responsible for curriculum development.
- 3.9. The student has access to all needed supplementary materials, research materials, technology, and services to allow them to be successful.
- 3.10. Shall be formally and systematically evaluated by the school and revised as needed.
- 3.11. Shall develop and maintain a systematic process for reporting student achievement.
- 3.12. That there are mechanisms in place to ensure adequate and appropriate teacher-student interaction (both synchronous and asynchronous) to maximize student learning and to allow for student questions.
- 3.13. Shall provide adequate information to students and parents about the grading and assessment policies of the school.
- 3.14. Shall be designed in the best interests of the students and shall have a minimum of 180 actual days or a minimum of 170 actual school days and the hourly equivalent of 180 actual school days determined as described below. (If the state requires an actual number of attendance days, the school must meet state requirements.)
- 3.15. Shall provide curriculum including subjects which constitute a well-balanced educational program and meet or exceed required government graduation requirements.
- 3.16. Shall teach Bible as an academic subject at every grade level with a minimum of three hours of instructional time per week.

#### **Standard 4: School Staff**

- 4.1. All members of the school staff shall be Christian and shall exhibit Christian character in all areas of life.
- 4.2. In the development and implementation of electronically delivered courses, issues such as faculty workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property, and faculty evaluation are mutually agreed upon and based on policy.
- 4.3. All school personnel (full/part time staff) are required to undergo a background check prior to their employment or being given access to students.
- 4.4. Shall hold a bachelor's degree and ACTS teaching certificate (core subject instructors). Additionally, all staff shall be qualified for whatever assignment given by the governing board.
- 4.5. The organization provides appropriate training, technological support, and professional development for faculty and support personnel.
- 4.6. The organization is responsible for quality assurance for all aspects of the program. e.g. If the organization is using "third party" products, ad hoc instructors, purchased modules, specialized software or outsourcing aspects of the program, the organization must ensure the integrity of the program and the performance of the "subcontracted" agents or products. (All third-party providers must comply with Standard 3.2)
- 4.7. The course architecture permits the online teacher to add content, activities, and assessments to extend the learning opportunities.
- 4.8. Deal professionally with students, parents, staff, and administration.
- 4.9. The support staff shall be sufficient in number as to provide adequate clerical assistance to the school.
- 4.10. The school's governing body shall appoint a full-time person as the chief administrator and who shall be on the full-time school staff and functioning in that capacity.
- 4.11. All administrative staff shall hold a bachelor's degree, an ACTS administrator certificate, and be qualified for whatever assignment given by the governing body.
- 4.12. All administrative staff shall show evidence of continued professional growth as evidenced by documented participation in the school's professional development and/or college or continuing education.
- 4.13. All administrative staff shall deal professionally with students, parents, staff, and administration.



- 4.14 The school shall establish a formal and systematic process of faculty/staff evaluation which shall be conducted on a periodic basis.
- 4.15 The school shall provide for a formal systematic process of annual staff development.
- 4.16 The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.

#### **Standard 5: Finances**

- 4.1 Shall provide evidence of an external financial review (as a minimum) the year prior to an accreditation team visit (or must comply with any state mandated requirements), sound, professional, ethical, and legal practices in all financial operations. (Note: External is defined as an accounting practice/firm that has no affiliation with the school, its employees, or students.)
- 4.2 Shall present evidence of adequate and identifiable financial resources and records to operate the school's program with a realistic annual operating budget approved by the governing body and reviewed regularly.
- 4.3 Shall publish a tuition and fee schedule that includes a tuition refund policy.

#### **Standard 6: Student Services**

- 6.1 The online service provider offers guidelines to help ensure that potential students have the appropriate background, skills, technological expertise, and the appropriate technology to reasonably expect student success.
- 6.2 There is adequate helpdesk and tutorial services available.
- 6.3 The online service provider communicates with the student and/or parents, as well as the student's regular school if applicable, the expectations, technologies, support services, and time estimates needed for course completion.
- 6.4 Assists the student in understanding independent learning, collaborative experiences, as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in a technology-based online environment.
- 6.5 Information is readily available to students, often through their local school, on how to enroll, what courses are available, and that all information is sufficient, fair, and accurate.
- 6.6 The online service provider has procedures and policies in place for registration, admission, withdrawal, etc. and this information is readily available and clearly explained.
- 6.7 The institution must address needs of the individual with disabilities when planning for and delivering distance education programs and courses.
- 6.8 All policies, procedures, and costs that relate to distance students are available online and clearly explained.
- 6.9 Students have a method to evaluate the delivery and structure of the courses and the organization provides an adequate means to resolve student complaints.
- 6.10 A student manual or school catalog for all courses and services is provided. This includes accurate and clearly stated information about admissions, progression, completion criteria, dismissal, grievance procedures, and any applicable licensing requirements.
- 6.11 Student orientation is provided to the distance education program and online learning.
- 6.12 A complete syllabus for each course delineates course specific information needed by students.

#### **Standard 7: Admission Procedures and Policies**

- 7.1 Shall be formulated and approved by the school governance.
- 7.2 Shall be clearly written in such a manner as to admit only those for whom the program is designed.
- 7.3 Shall contain a published policy of non-discrimination and demonstrate consistent adherence.
- 7.4 Shall address all financial arrangements between the school and parents/students.

#### **Standard 8: Records**

- 8.1 Records shall be kept in a safe, secure, and professional manner (fireproof or electronically current, retrievable dual backed format).
- 8.2 Student records shall be kept on each student enrolled in the school and updated on a regular basis.

- 8.3 Student records shall include academic, health, discipline, and other pertinent information.
- 8.4 The school shall make provision for the permanent maintenance of all student and faculty records, which includes a policy for the permanent retrieval and storage in the event of school closure.
- 8.5 Access to student records shall follow the provisions of all local, state, and federal regulations relating to an individual's right to privacy.
- 8.6 Personnel records for faculty and administration shall include transcripts, contracts, tax records, form I-9, evaluations, and professional licensure (ACTS certification).

#### **Standard 9: Evaluation and Assessment**

- 9.1 The online service provider ensures that course instructors provide performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free.
- 9.2 Student assessment data is used for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes.
- 9.3 Systematic analysis is conducted of instructional and organizational effectiveness and this information is used to improve provider services.
- 9.4 Procedures and policies are in place for establishing student identity, assuring security of test instruments, administering the examinations, assuring secure and prompt evaluation, and integrity of student work.
- 9.5 Personal information is protected while providing appropriate dissemination of evaluation results.
- 9.6 Overall program/course effectiveness is determined by such measures as:
  - The extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes.
  - Student retention/completion rates, including variations over time.
  - Student, parent, and faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys/evaluations and by formal and informal review processes.
  - Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives. Equitable relationships and evaluation results between distance education students and on-site students.

#### **Standard 10: Publications**

- 10.1 Shall contain a statement of non-discrimination.
- 10.2 Shall be true, accurate, and reflect ethical guidelines.
- 10.3 The school shall have a student handbook that informs students and parents of the school's philosophy, programs and support services such as academic calendar, attendance policies (in accordance with state requirements), guidance services, health services, transportation, food services, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, graduation requirements, grading scales and assessment policies.
- 10.4 The school shall publish a faculty and personnel handbook which shall include the following: philosophy of the school, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, grading, and personnel evaluation policies, and a policy statement of due process and grievance procedures.

#### **Standard 11: Student Data Analysis**

- 11.1 See to the continuous collection, analysis, and application of learning goals from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data concerning student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions.
- 11.2 Shall facilitate annual training in best practices of evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.
- 11.3 Engages in creating and implementing measurable and verifiable student learning goals based on multiple data points, which include but are not limited to standardized/norm referenced testing, formal and informal assessments.
- 11.4 Shall monitor and communicate annually comprehensive information and analysis of student learning goals, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.

## CHAPTER 5: FLORIDA'S GOLD SEAL PRESCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

### **STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY, GOVERNANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION**

**RATIONALE:** *The role of the governing entity is to provide oversight of the early education program and to create general policies that will ensure high-quality care and educational opportunities for the children. The governing entity should empower the administrator, director, or program head to make day-to-day decisions concerning the implementation of the policies and programs being offered by the organization. These policies should be reflective of the mission and philosophy of the early education program. Nationally accepted research provided through a cooperative effort of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Childcare, The Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Go to School and The National Research Council in Eager to Learn notes that a well-planned, high-quality early childhood program leads to the success of children in later academic years. This is especially true for young children who are at greater risk of school failure because of poverty, low level maternal education, and other factors that limit opportunities and resources that enhance learning and development (Bowman 2001).*

- 1.1 **Mission and Vision Statements:** The program has a written mission statement and a written vision statement that clearly articulates the program's purpose for the care and/or education of young children and is agreement with an approved ACTS Statement of Faith.
- 1.2 **Philosophy of Education Statement:** The program has a written philosophy regarding the care and/or education of young children, the philosophy is based on current research and "best practices" in the field and is consistent with the program's mission and vision statements, and is stated in the preschool's literature informing staff, parents, children, and prospective families of the preschool's philosophy.
- 1.3 **Bylaws:** The corporate status of the entity having oversight of the early education program, whether incorporated, franchised, proprietary, or religiously affiliated, has clearly articulated bylaws that include the early education program.
- 1.4 **Governance Entity:** Programs under the auspices of another organization and/or agency are represented by a governing entity or committee (hereinafter referred to as "the governance") responsible for the general policies and the financial stability of the early education program. Individuals within the governance shall be spiritual leaders of a local church.
- 1.5 **Bylaws Authority:** The governance operates in conjunction with and under the appropriate bylaws of the corporation.
- 1.6 **Governing Policies and Procedures:** The governance establishes and maintains written governing policies and procedures that are consistent with the program's philosophy.
- 1.7 **Governance Role and Responsibilities:** The governance has clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the early education program, new governance members are provided with an orientation when they join the governance consisting of the program's written policies defining roles and responsibilities of board members and staff.
- 1.8 **Minutes of Meetings:** Written minutes of governance meetings are maintained on file.
- 1.9 **Evaluation of Director:** The governance ensures an annual evaluation of the early education administrator/director (hereinafter referred to as "the director").
- 1.10 **Response to Civil Authorities' Requirements:** The governance ensures the program meets and/or exceeds all requirements of civil authorities in the areas of health and safety, child-staff ratios, background screening, fingerprinting, and staff training requirements (or training requirement equivalencies) regardless of any exception status that may be present.
- 1.11 **Evaluation of Program:** The director (or director qualified personal) submits an annual program evaluation based on early childhood/child development theory, research, and best practices, and assists the governance in setting and prioritizing short- and long-range goals for the program.
- 1.12 **Financial Stability and Integrity:** The program is not undergoing financial reorganization to protect itself from creditors.
- 1.13 **Governance Responsibility for Fiscal Matters:** The governance provides oversight of the program, and it reviews the financial position of the program and ensures its stability.

- 1.14 School/Center/Program Improvement: The Governance will develop, document, and implement a Strategic Plan for improvement that containing goals, measurable objectives, timeline for improving the program that address the areas of: Curriculum, Personnel, Physical Environment, Family & Community Relations, Directives from the previous site visit, and other self-identified areas of needed improvement. (Minimum six-year plan).
- 1.15 Financial Records: The school/center is required to have an annual operating budget and at least quarterly reconciliations. The governance requires a review of the program's financial records, including an annual external review or audit. General accounting procedures used by the program have been validated by an appropriate outside source.
- 1.16 Insurance: In order to ensure the stability of the program in the case of a significant litigation, the governance maintains adequate liability and accident insurance including insurance on any vehicle that transports children.
- 1.17 Staff Salaries and Benefits: The governing entity approves wages and benefits. Wages, benefits, recruitment procedures, and staff retention are reviewed at least annually by the governance. Policies reflect an effort to compensate and retain quality staff by including benefits such as health coverage, sick leave, vacation leave, continuing education, Social Security, and an opportunity to participate in a tax-sheltered annuity, or other type of retirement plan on a prorated basis where applicable. Paid planning time away from children is also provided.
- 1.18 Admissions: Clear admissions policies and procedures are stated in writing. These policies and procedures are open in admissions, inclusive, and nondiscriminatory. Policies reflect the diversity of all children, various family structures, and the community being served.
- 1.19 Records: The director ensures current, complete, confidential records for each child are kept and are available to authorized personnel. The file might include such information as the child's life history, behavioral patterns, assessments of developmental and cognitive development, interests, and appropriate health records as noted in the Health and Safety section of this document.
- 1.20 Discipline: The director oversees interaction between staff and children, publishing the discipline policies and procedures for parents/guardians and staff and taking appropriate measures to maintain discipline. Corporal punishment or legally questionable practices will not be utilized. Christian values and principles are prevalent across disciplines and are interwoven throughout each day's activities in an age- appropriate manner.

## **STANDARD 2 – PERSONNEL**

**RATIONALE:** *Research suggests that the performance of the program director, particularly as it relates to providing leadership in a program, functioning at the administrative level, and providing high- quality supervision and feedback, predicts program quality (NCEDL). The quality of care and education received by the children, the continuing education and professional growth of the staff, and the confidence the parents will have in the program, is dependent on the knowledge and skills of the early education administrators (CFOC Standards 2002). Extensive research has been conducted concerning the effect of early education programs on young children. The education of the staff and the training they have received in the field, as well as child to staff ratio's and group sizes and staff turnover, may play a significant role in the quality of an early education program. The longer the amount of time children attend such programs, the more likely both positive and negative consequences can be attributed to the quality of the program (Hepburn 1995). Children in early education programs who are taught and cared for by an educated staff have been shown to be more compliant and socially competent. College-educated early educators are also better equipped in developing age-appropriate goals and activities for children (Fine 2002). Several research studies suggest that child to staff ratio and group size impacts the health, safety, and school readiness of young children (Fine 2002, Bowman 2001, CFOC 2002). The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School research project found that children in early education programs with lower ratio's and low staff turnover built closer teacher-child relationships which resulted in better classroom social and thinking skills, language ability, and math skills into the elementary school years (1999).*

- 2.1 Employee Handbook: All staff receives a copy of the employee handbook. The staff are instructed at least annually on the program's employee policies. The handbook should include (as a minimum) a statement of nondiscrimination, philosophy of the preschool, dress code, rules and regulations, discipline procedures, personnel evaluation policies, and a policy statement of due process and grievance procedures.
- 2.2 Nondiscrimination Policy: The program has a published nondiscrimination policy relating its hiring practices that shows God's love for people regarding "race, color, sex, and/or ethnicity."

- 2.3 Spiritually, Culturally and Racially Appropriate Staff: The program actively seeks a diverse staff that reflects the school population and its surrounding community. All members of the preschool staff shall be Christian and shall exhibit Christian character in all areas of life. The “Fruit of the Spirit” according to Galatians 5:22-23 shall be evident in all staff members.
- 2.4 Background Screening: The program’s hiring procedures include Level 2 Background screening and fingerprinting to obtain a history regarding types of abuse (physical, sexual, etc.) and any criminal convictions for all employees and for others who have direct access with the children in the program.
- 2.5 Staff Orientation: New staff are provided with an orientation and/or a Staff Manual that should include but not be limited to the following: goals and philosophy of the program, planned activities for the program, appropriate classroom management techniques, peer observations, routines and transitions in which the children in the program are engaged, discipline policies and procedures, communication with parents, mealtimes and food-handling policies, occupational health hazards, emergency procedures – First Aid/Pediatric CPR, general health policies and procedures (including but not limited to the following: hand-washing techniques, diapering techniques and toileting - including proper diaper disposal and diaper-changing techniques where applicable), child abuse/child neglect detection, prevention, and reporting, cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures, documentation of symptoms, and implementation of ill-child policies (that include the following: applying the program’s policies regarding exclusion of ill children and readmission of them after illness, cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures, documenting and administering prescribed medication if given to children during program hours by program employees, notifying parents/guardians regarding a communicable disease occurring in children or staff, assessing the health of children daily, recognition of symptoms of illness).
- 2.6 Director Qualifications: Director must be at least 21 years old and must meet one of the following: An undergraduate degree in one (1) of the following: Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Social Work, Early Childhood Special Education, Nursing, Child Care Management, or other child-related field, OR A combination of coursework and experience that includes a minimum of four (4) college-level courses in Early Childhood Education and Child Development, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Childcare Management and two (2) years of experience as a lead teacher or director serving the children of the age groups in care.
- 2.7 Director General Responsibilities: The director is charged with assuming responsibility of the day-to-day operations of the program, maintaining program policies, and monitoring the program’s compliance with applicable requirements of civil authorities. The director’s leadership addresses the program’s goal of fostering the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and character development of children.
- 2.8 Director Experience: The director and/or program director has experience working directly with children whose ages are represented in the early education program for which the director/program director has oversight. The director, and any other leadership with delegated authority, are knowledgeable about how policy changes at the local, state, tribal, or national levels affect services and resources available for children and families.
- 2.9 Hiring Staff: The director/administrator is responsible for hiring staff who support the philosophy and mission of the program in accord with applicable governance procedures and are a minimum of 18 years old. If staff will be driving a vehicle, that staff member must be at least 21 years old.
- 2.10 Evaluation of New Employees: The director ensures a formal evaluation of new employees takes place no more than 90 days into the orientation period and at pre- determined periods thereafter. Note: A new employee is not considered permanent until the director has assessed his/her mental and physical health and ability to work effectively with young children.
- 2.11 Evaluation of all Employees: The director ensures for each staff member an annual written evaluation is conducted that contributes to the staff member’s professional development and is kept in the staff member’s file.
- 2.12 Follow-up Evaluation of Staff: The director discusses the formal written evaluations with each staff person confidentially and recognizes strengths as well as those areas needing improvement. The areas needing improvement receive follow-up.
- 2.13 Staff Substitutes: The director has a current list of qualified/trained substitutes who may be called upon to maintain the integrity of the program.

- 2.14 Acting Director: The director designates a qualified person to assume leadership and responsibility of the early education program in the event of his/her absence.
- 2.15 Developing Relationships: Staff treat colleagues, children and their families with equal respect and consideration regardless of race, religions, family backgrounds, or cultures; Respectful relationships with children are developed by smiling, touching, holding, and speaking to children at their eye level throughout the day, during routines such as arrival and departure and mealtimes as well as during teacher planned and child- initiated experiences; Respectful relationships between colleagues encouraged and reflect mutual trust, respect, and support for each other. Staff members seek out and acknowledge each other's ideas and opinions. Staff give positive recognition to each other's skills and accomplishments and provide appropriate support for each other in dealing with stress maintain confidences at all times.
- 2.16 Staff Meetings: The director builds strong relationships and communication between the staff and administration, encourages team collaboration and spirit among the staff. Regular staff meetings are held for staff to consult on program planning, to plan for implementing and attaining goals, to plan for individual children and family involvement, and to discuss program and working conditions.
- 2.17 Program Evaluation with Staff: The director meets with the staff annually to evaluate the early education program and to discuss data collected through information management systems, relational conversations, and observations of strengths as well as growth opportunities. All growth areas are addressed after the meetings through a specific Program Improvement Plan. The school/center should include a robust teacher retention plan to ensure continuity of supervision and stability of relationships.
- 2.18 Personnel Files: The director maintains a confidential personnel file on each employee. The file should contain but not be limited to the following and/or contain information that are required by civil authorities: resume, application, copies of college or university transcripts, references, copy of high school/GED diplomas (required), background screening and results (Level 2), fingerprints/clearance, annual staff evaluations, documentation of any grievances, evidence of in-service training, copy of contract/work agreement, I-9 form, health screening data (if required).
- 2.19 Volunteers: Volunteers must be at least 16 years old, undergo orientation, background screening, fingerprinting, and training. They work under the supervision of qualified staff.
- 2.20 Qualifications: Qualifications of all instructional and support staff meet or exceed the requirements of civil authorities.
- 2.21 Job Descriptions and Other Staff Policies: Clear and up-to-date written personnel policies have been developed by the program. These policies include but are not limited to job descriptions; wages and benefits; and resignation, termination, and grievance procedures.
- 2.22 Communication of Personnel Policies: Written personnel policies have been communicated with the staff, and receipt of them by the staff has been documented.
- 2.23 Lead Teachers: The director recruits and hires quality staff members that are at least 21 years old, and must have the following qualifications: An undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Social Work, Nursing, or other child-related field, and a minimum of one (1) year experience working in a child care program serving children ages 0-5, **OR** a national competency-based early childhood credential such as the CCP, CDA, or state equivalent (i.e., Florida Child Care Professional Credential), and two (2) years of experience as a teacher serving the children of the age groups in care, **OR** a combination of coursework and experience including: a high school diploma or GED, a minimum of four (4) college-level courses in Early Childhood Education and/or Child Development, and a minimum of three (3) years' experience working in a child care program serving children ages 0-5.
- 2.24 Assistant Teachers: Assistant teachers must be at least 18 years old and hold a High School diploma or GED.
- 2.25 Early Childhood Specialist: If an early childhood specialist is employed (other than the Director/Administrator), the qualifications of the specialist are a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education/child development and at least three years of full-time teaching experience with young children and/or a graduate degree in early childhood education/child development.

- 2.26 Administrator/Director PD Requirements: The director obtains a minimum of thirty clock hours during the first year of employment especially as relates to State requirements. An additional twenty-four hours per year of continuing professional development, provided by a qualified entity, in such areas as emergent literacy and mathematics, child or staff development, programming, administration, health and safety, family relations, legal issues, communications, and technology is recommended. Whenever possible, continuing education should be validated by college credit and provided as a benefit of employment, part of tuition reimbursement program or financial assistance.
- 2.27 Instructional Staff PD Requirements: All teaching staff (including lead teachers, assistants, and volunteers) must complete job-related professional development during the first year of employment. Training must be specific to the age(s) or the special circumstances/specific needs of the children staff teach. Topics to include: behavior management; inclusion; medication administration; child abuse reporting and compliance; health; safety; child development; nutrition; evaluation; language and literacy; curriculum; parent involvement; communication skills; and diverse races, cultures, and languages. All teaching staff (including lead teachers, assistants, and volunteers) must complete at least 24 hours of job-related professional development annually, following the first year of employment. Training must be specific to the age(s) or the special circumstances/specific needs of the children staff teach. Topics to include: behavior management; inclusion; medication administration; child abuse reporting and compliance; health; safety; child development; nutrition; evaluation; language and literacy; curriculum; parent involvement; communication skills; and diverse races, cultures, and languages.
- 2.28 Support Staff Requirements: Support staff—such as secretaries, kitchen staff, substitutes, and aides—have training and/or experience to carry out their role in an early education program.
- 2.29 Certification: All Gold Seal staff who are in charge of a group of children (Administrators, Directors, Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, etc.) must have an ACTS Preschool Certificate. In cases where staff members do not meet the specific qualifications, a training plan, both individualized and program wide, has been developed and is being implemented for those staff members. NOTE – Centers/Preschools must comply with state and local requirements for Preschool staff/supervision as well.
- 2.30 Additional Memberships/Engagement: The administration and instructional staff are encouraged to join and participate in other local, state, national, and/or international early education professional organizations. The program staff are encouraged and given the opportunity to participate in community or statewide interagency councils or service integration efforts.
- 2.31 Supervision of Children: The staff maintains a continuous, accurate account of the children in their care. Infants are given one-to-one attention when engaging in care giving routines.
- 2.32 Internal Communication Related to Supervision: Staff who are sharing the primary responsibility of a group of children communicate with one another to ensure smooth operation of the program.
- 2.33 Child-Staff Ratios & Supervision: In order to ensure the care, bonding, and nurturing of the individual child, each group of children has one primary teacher/caregiver. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children. The program is organized and staffed to minimize the number of group, teaching staff, and classroom transitions experienced by an individual child during the day and program year. Policies prescribe that each group of children be assigned teaching staff who have primary responsibility for working with that group. Policies encourage keeping infants and toddlers to age two (2) together with their teaching staff for nine (9) months or longer. *NOTE: When mixed age groups of infants and toddlers are in the same room, the child staff ratio is maintained according to the youngest child in the room. If the children in the mixed age group are older than toddlers, the child-staff ratio is maintained according to the average age of the children.*

<u>Age:</u>	<u>Maximum Staff:Child Ratio</u>	<u>Maximum Group Size</u>
Birth-24 Months	1:3-4	6-8
25-35 Months	1:4-6	8-12
3-year olds	1:6-9	12-18
4-year olds/5-year olds	1:8-10	16-20
Kindergarten	1:9-12	18-24
6-8 years old	1:10-12	20-24
9-12 years old	1:12-15	24-30

### **STANDARD 3: CURRICULUM**

**RATIONALE:** *Research on cognition and learning, child development, and the social and cultural context of learning has shown that young children are competent learners even at a young age. It is important to note, however, that the “pace of learning will depend on whether and to what extent the child’s inclinations to learn encounter and engage supporting environments” (Bowman, et al. 2001). Federal-State partnerships in the delivery of quality early education programs are now being formed that impact all pre-kindergarten program. These educational reform initiatives have specifically targeted the need to align expectations of the early education program prior to children entering kindergarten and what is expected of them once they enter the elementary school years. Initiatives are also being developed to evaluate the success of the early education program by how well the children are prepared to succeed once in the elementary school system. Finally, initiatives to develop informational pieces to educate teachers, parents, childcare providers, and others are in place to provide ways to prepare children to be ready for school. Voluntary guidelines are being developed to support early education programs in preparing young children in the areas of literacy, language, pre-reading skills, pre-mathematics, science, and early social studies. These standards were based on a review of State and Federal pre-kindergarten curricular guidelines.*

#### **Content Area Rationales:**

**Language and Literacy** - The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the whole child including social, emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and the development of character incorporating Christian principles into each subject area where possible. This includes but is not limited to the multiple intelligences, learning styles, and learning preferences of each child. Children begin developing language and literacy at birth. As young children express their feelings, ask questions, and share imaginative stories, they are communicating what they know about their world. Between the ages of three and five children are becoming more aware of print in their environment, however, oral language continues to be their primary means of communicating (Preschool Planning Guide 1998).

**Mathematical Awareness** - Young children begin to develop the concept of number through interactions in their environment daily. They learn through observations and hands-on activities that objects may be manipulated, sorted, ordered, and quantified. They learn about relationships, when engaged in meaningful experiences involving skills that include collecting, counting, building, and comparing. “As they proceed through the daily routine, children experience a variety of ‘math moments.’” (Preschool Planning Guide 1998).

**Science** - Preschool children learn about the natural world, including the physical properties of things around them, as they interact with objects, people, and other living things. Children whose early lives are rich in sensory experiences and accompanying verbal labels tend to have greater facility for building up the more complex labels and patterns required for thought and problem solving in later life.

**Social Studies** - Preschool children develop an awareness of self as a growing individual. They learn about their own needs, interests, and abilities. They begin to learn about similarities and differences between themselves and others, including their peers, their family members, and their community.

- 3.1 **Curriculum Guide:** The curriculum used by an early education program consists of proven successful resources with a consistent scope and sequence for each age group. Written goals and objectives drawn from researched- based developmental benchmarks and scientifically based research is included and reviewed on an annual basis.
- 3.2 **Lessons Plans:** Instructional staff develop lesson plans for each class/age group that reflects the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Plans are developed through *consultation and shared ideas with other colleagues who communicate frequently to ensure smooth operations.*
- 3.3 **Balanced Program--Indoor and Outdoor Play:** The curriculum is designed to meet the physical needs of each child. The curriculum includes a balance of indoor and outdoor play opportunities to enable the children to develop gross-motor skills
- 3.4 **Motor Skills:** The curriculum and lesson plans provide opportunities for children to develop fine- and gross-motor skills while fostering cognitive learning through age-appropriate problem solving.
- 3.5 **Spiritual, Social, and Emotional:** The curriculum and environment provide opportunities to foster the spiritual/social/emotional development of children through respectful interactions with children by frequently, making eye contact and using clear, correct language patterns, and affectionate, supportive words. Staff- child interactions are an integral part of the social development of children’s emotional development which is exemplified by a supportive and comfortable environment where they can be relaxed, happy, and involved in play and other activities. Christian values and principles are prevalent across disciplines and are interwoven throughout each day’s activities in an age-appropriate manner.
- 3.6 **Balanced Activities:** The curricular practices provide for a balance of active and quiet activities including large-group (teacher-directed), small-group (teacher/child- interactive), and individual-choice (child-initiated) activities throughout the day. Bible stories are presented as truth and are taught in ways appropriate to the children’s developmental levels.



- 3.7 Length of Group Times: The length of group times is appropriate for the age and development of the children in the class. In mixed-age groupings, accommodations and flexibility meet the needs of each age group included in the class.
- 3.8 Use of Transition Activities: Staff uses transition activities to move the children from one activity to another throughout the day. Transitional tools may include songs, poems, or other signs that children recognize as signaling a change of activity.
- 3.9 Materials and Equipment: Ample developmentally appropriate materials and equipment are provided to support the learning objectives of the program's scope and sequence. Materials and equipment may include but are not limited to manipulatives, puzzles, building materials, musical instruments, creative art materials, sand and water tables, dolls, and other props that support the educational objectives. Worship songs, prayer, and Scripture verses are integrated into daily routines and activities.
- 3.10 Small Group and Large Group Instruction: Ample opportunities for children to interact independently, in small groups and in large groups, are provided in order to help meet social/spiritual/emotional needs of children. Throughout words and actions, staff members serve as Christian role models.
- 3.11 Involving the Children: Instructional staff initiates interaction with children who are not engaged in order to stimulate and expand the involvement of these children in the classroom offerings.
- 3.12 Healthy Nutrition in Curriculum: Curricular plans include ensuring children learn about healthy nutrition through experience and instruction, as appropriate to the program.
- 3.13 Good Health Practices: Children are made aware of good health practices. Methods may include the use of related daily routines by teachers, teacher example, visits to health facilities or from health care professionals, and other curricular presentations appropriate to the program's curriculum.
- 3.14 Disciplinary Policies and Practices: The program's discipline policy is clearly articulated in a written document. The policy employs interactive procedures such as redirection, reflective listening, adult role modeling, and positive reinforcement. Corporal punishment or demeaning practices are not used. Biblical principles are implemented for conflict resolution, guidance, and discipline.
- 3.15 Forming Habits and Routines: Staff prepares the environment and plans the flow of the day in such a way that encourages children to become independent and to accept personal responsibility with initiative. For example, routines are clearly established so that children know when to clean and organize the room, when to put on clothing for outside activities, and/or when to transition to different activities.
- 3.16 Hand Washing and Cleanliness: Hand-washing techniques are appropriately taught as part of the curriculum. Specifically, hand-washing always precedes eating, and children regularly wash hands after bathroom use and outside activities.
- 3.17 Proper use of Media & Technology: Media (especially videos) are used on a limited basis, and are used particularly for the reinforcement of a teaching topic.
- 3.18 Special Needs Children: The early care and education program is designed to be an inclusive environment and include children with identified disabilities, special learning and developmental needs. Teachers of special needs children have developed individual program plans and access to a referral system. Children are professionally evaluated and their progress is reviewed through a team approach which includes parents, teachers, and specialist.
- 3.19 Enrollment and Termination of Special Needs Children: Policies regarding the enrollment and termination of children protect children's rights as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- 3.20 Appropriate Language Experience: Receptive and expressive language experiences appropriate to the development of children are provided throughout the day. Children in the preschool classes are provided with increased exposure to print and active experiences that support the development of listening and speaking concepts and skills.
- 3.21 Print-Rich Environment: Teachers provide daily interactions with labels, signs, and/or other forms of print, and read aloud to the children. They provide exposure to the sounds and names of the letters of the alphabet.

- 3.22 Vocabulary and Comprehensive Development: The instructional staff consciously works to help children develop vocabulary and comprehension. They verbally interact with the children to guide them in the acquisition of new and expanded vocabulary, in anticipating outcomes, and in comprehension of what they have heard. This may include (1) “What if?” type questions to help children anticipate outcomes, (2) recall of a story, and (3) other verbal interactions that help the children understand sequence (building memory), interaction between characters, etc.
- 3.23 Phonemic Awareness: “Children begin to develop a phonemic awareness through understanding that words are made up of a combination of sounds. Lesson plans reflect a variety of songs, finger plays, stories, and games that have rhyming words and alliteration to strengthen phonemic awareness.” (Preschool Planning Guide 1998). Lesson plans include activities that encourage the awareness of phonemes, such as (1) listening for sounds in words; (2) beginning to isolate the syllables of a word using snapping, clapping, or rhythmic movement (e.g., cat, apple); (3) learning to differentiate between sounds that are the same and different (e.g., environmental sounds, animal sounds, phonemes); and (4) beginning to recognizing when words share phonemes (sounds) and repeat the common phoneme (e.g., /b/ as in Bob, ball, baby; /t/ as in Tom, kite, boat) (ODE 2002)
- 3.24 Alphabet: Children are exposed to the form and function of the alphabet through opportunities such as tracing shapes, copying or writing letters, and practicing writing names.
- 3.25 Mathematical Activities: The instructional staff plan activities that expose children daily to math activities such as sorting and classifying concrete objects; recognizing and identify likenesses and differences; recognizing first, middle, and last; using opposite concepts such as long and short, in and out, up and down, over and under, and top and bottom; and using concepts of quantity, such as more than and less than.
- 3.26 Mathematical Concepts: The instructional staff plan ample opportunities for children to be exposed to basic math concepts such as numbers and numeration through counting; placing objects in one-to-one correspondence; grouping objects by color, shape, or other characteristics; patterning; and recognizing numbers in their environment.
- 3.27 Sensory-Rich Environment: The preschool classroom is a sensory-rich environment, and it includes numerous objects and organisms with which the students can interact. Opportunities are provided throughout the day for children to use their senses for observing and learning about objects, events, and organisms. Instructional staff help children to perform simple investigations and to describe their observations.
- 3.28 Advancement of Social Skills: Instructional staff promotes the advancement of social skills and positive dispositions by offering numerous opportunities for children to learn about themselves and others.
- 3.29 Promotion of Communication and Interaction: Instructional staff foster positive communication and interaction as preschoolers actively engage in a variety of such learning experiences as taking turns, playing simple small-group games, and performing daily routines. If available, the staff should take advantage of outside entities to connect “real-life environments” with the classroom.
- 3.30 Cultural and Racial Awareness: Instructional staff provide opportunities and activities that expose children and themselves to cultural diversity through Biblical Worldview shaping instruction.
- 3.31 Musical Experiences: The curriculum daily provides age-appropriate opportunities to expose children in each age group to a variety of musical experiences— including child-initiated ones—such as singing, listening, rhythmic movements, and playing rhythm instruments.
- 3.32 Creative Arts Experiences: The curriculum daily provides opportunities to expose children in each age group to a variety of age-appropriate creative arts experiences—including child-initiated ones—such as painting, gluing items together to create art, cutting for design purposes, combining mediums, molding with clay, and creating one’s own stories, plays, and other dramatic activities.
- 3.33 Curriculum Involvement and Training: Instructional staff is trained in the use and deliverance of the curriculum. Opportunities for instructional staff to share their suggestions and ideas regarding the curriculum are provided annually.
- 3.34 Continuous Student Assessment: Ongoing assessment of children’s progress (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, language development, etc.) takes place and is used to plan activities for individual children and for groups of children. Children’s progress is reported with supporting documentation, and the assessment methods are consistent with the program’s philosophy and methodology.

- 3.35 Variety of Assessment Techniques: The program recognizes that instructional improvement, as evidenced by the progress of children, requires the use of multiple tools for assessment. Such assessment should include such tools of evidence as the following: *Samples of children's concrete learning explorations (writing and art projects) and sketches of constructions with blocks or sand; Photographs, audio recordings, and videos of children engaged in play while alone and while in groups in a variety of situations and of children otherwise engaged in interactions with others; Written observations such as time and event samplings of children's interactions, individual and group activities, and language while alone and in groups; A checklist of developmental levels and behaviors, on which to mark children's progress and increasing capacities across time; Observations that address all areas of children's development—that is, the seven intelligences, not just cognitive development; Results of screenings and formal assessments; Individual portfolios that contain a wide array of these records and other documentation and that aid teachers in using flexibility to adapt lesson plans; Written assessment tools shared with parents.*
- 3.36 Training for Assessment: The director ensures instructional staff either are qualified to observe children and record these observations or have aid from personnel trained in methods of observing children and recording these observations. Results of observations are used for curriculum planning after identification of each child's stage of development, and parent/guardian conferences.
- 3.37 Age-Appropriate Assessment Tools: An age-appropriate, research-based assessment tool is used to identify the developmental levels and growth of children.
- 3.38 Observations of Child Development: Observations of children by staff address all areas of children's development, including but not limited to multiple intelligences, learning styles, and learning preferences and character development.
- 3.39 Teaching Toward Individual needs: Observations of children by staff address the various learning styles, multiple intelligences, and learning preferences. Staff then use these observations to incorporate classroom activities that address the individual needs.

#### **STANDARD 4 – NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICES**

**RATIONALE:** One of the basic responsibilities of every parent and caregiver is to provide nourishing food that is clean, safe, and developmentally appropriate for children (Caring for Our Children 2002). Early food and eating experiences are the foundation for the formation of attitudes about food and eating behavior and consequently of food habits. Sound food habits build on eating and enjoying a variety of healthful foods. Including culturally acceptable family foods is a dietary goal for feeding infants and young children. Current research documents that a balanced diet combined with regular and routine age-appropriate physical activity can reduce the risks of chronic diseases later in life that are related to diet (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 2000).

- 4.1 Response to Civil Authorities' Standards: If food is prepared on the premises, the program must be in compliance with the requirements of civil authorities for food storage, preparation, and service. Food may be prepared at an approved facility and transported to the program in approved containers and at approved temperatures. Regular evaluations of the food program should be made to ensure nutritional content, portion sizes, food safety, procedures for food safety, and proper documentation of all regulations.
- 4.2 Nutritional Guidelines: The meals and/or snacks provided for the children meet the nutritional guidelines regarding food groups and quantities that are age appropriate for the children, as suggested by the Child Care Food Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In regards to infants and toddlers: The program does not feed cow's milk to infants younger than 12 months, and it serves only whole milk to children of ages 12 months to 24 months; If the program provides food to infants, staff work with families (who are informed by their child's health care provider) to ensure that the food is based on each infant's individual nutritional needs and developmental stage; Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice; Teaching staff offer children fluids from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use a cup; Teaching staff do not offer solid foods and fruit juices to infants younger than six months of age, unless that practice is recommended by the child's health care provider and approved by families; Sweetened beverages are avoided. If juice (only 100% fruit juice is recommended) is served, the amount is limited to no more than four ounces per child daily.
- 4.3 Sanitary Conditions: Kitchen equipment is monitored by civil authorities, where applicable, to ensure healthy and sanitary conditions.

- 4.4 Food Service Menus: The program prepares written daily, weekly, and/or monthly menus that: a) are kept on file for review by certified inspectors and/or the accrediting association, b) illustrate that meals and snacks are at regularly established times, c) illustrate that meals and snacks are at least two (2) hours apart but no more than three (3) hours apart, d) are posted in such a way that they are easily seen by parents/guardians, e) demonstrate that at least two food groups are included for each snack (programs are encouraged to ensure one of these items is a protein source), and four food groups are included for each meal.
- 4.5 Suggestions for Food from Home: Suggestions for food choices that meet nutritional requirements are made available to the parents/guardians who send meals and/or snacks with their own children. Parents/guardians are encouraged to include at least two food groups, including one protein source, for each snack and four food groups for each meal. The school/center may supplement with additional food if necessary.
- 4.6 Food Storage: Food brought from home is labeled properly and stored appropriately, and if intended to be shared – commercially packaged/factory sealed individualized containers or whole fruit.
- 4.7 Standards for Mealtime: Mealtime is to be cultivated as a pleasant social time. Staff members sit with children and encourage healthy social interaction, appropriate table manners, and good eating habits. Children younger than four (4) years old are not served the following foods: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, chunks of raw carrots, or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Food for infants must be cut into ¼ inch square portions. Food for toddlers/2-year-olds must be cut into ½ inch square portions. Teeth brushing and gum cleaning are emphasized and regularly attended to.
- 4.8 Size of Furniture: Tables and chairs used for snacks/mealtimes are appropriate for the sizes of the children.
- 4.9 Children's Responsibilities: The children are encouraged to serve themselves and assist with cleanup, within age-appropriate levels of ability.
- 4.10 Feeding Infants: Teaching staff who are familiar with the infant feed him/her whenever the infant seems hungry. Feeding is not used in lieu of other forms of comfort. Infants are held when bottle-fed by teachers who are familiar with Infant Best Practices. Bottles are never placed in cribs at any time. For Breastfed babies: Accepting, storing, and serving expressed milk for feedings; Accepting milk in ready-to-feed sanitary containers labeled with the infant's name and date and storing it in a refrigerator for no longer than 48 hours (or no more than 24 hours if the breast milk was previously frozen) or in a freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for no longer than three months; Ensuring that staff gently mix, not shake, the milk before feeding to preserve special infection-fighting and nutritional components in breast milk; and provide a comfortable place for breastfeeding and coordinating feedings with the infant's mother. Adults have comfortable places to sit, hold, and feed infants that avoid injury of children who may be on the floor.
- 4.11 Formula, Milk, & Breastmilk Storage/Warming: Staff discards after one (1) hour any formula or human milk that is served but not completely consumed or is not refrigerated. If staff warm formula or human milk, the milk is warmed in water at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than five minutes. No milk, including breast milk, and no other infant foods are warmed in a microwave oven. Except for breast milk, staff serve only formula and infant food that come to the facility in factory-sealed containers (e.g., ready-to-feed powder or concentrated formulas and baby food jars) and are prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 4.12 Recording of Food Intake and Times: Feeding times and amount of food consumed are recorded and made available to parents/guardians of infants and toddlers on a daily basis.

## **STANDARD 5 – PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**RATIONALE:** Programs should provide equipment, materials, and space to facilitate the children's success in learning, by encouraging teachers to effectively organize the classroom and playground environments in a way that not only promotes the achievement of each child's educational goals but also increases the number of opportunities for achieving these goals during both child- and teacher-initiated activities (Bowman, et al. 2001).

- 5.1 Lighting and Ventilation: The physical environment of the program provides sufficient lighting, good ventilation, and a comfortable temperature.
- 5.2 Suitable for Class Size: Classrooms are suitable for the age and activities of the children in the program. Floor space meets or exceeds a minimum of thirty-five square feet of usable space per child.

- 5.3 Classroom Maintenance: Classrooms are clean and well maintained (no sharp edges, pinch points, peeling paint, missing parts, etc.).
- 5.4 Classroom Arrangement of Furnishings: The physical environment of the classroom is arranged not only to stimulate learning by accommodating large and small groups of children but also to encourage exploration and experimentation. Rockers are available when necessary in the infant room. The following are examples: Infants have a protected space for crawling and playing away from more mobile babies. Mirrors, pull-up bars, and/or other interactive items are placed on the walls at babies' eye level. Cribs are inspected regularly. Drop side cribs are not used.
- 5.5 Age-Appropriate Furniture and Equipment: The environment is designed and facilitates optimal age-appropriate learning experiences. Shelving and storage units provide an organized flow to the room and thereby invite children to interact with materials and equipment. Adaptations allow for students with disabilities to participate in program activities. Potential choking hazards are removed from proximity to children.
- 5.6 Children's Personal Storage Space: Children are provided with individual spaces, such as cubbies, in which they can store their work and personal belongings.
- 5.7 Appropriate Classroom Flooring: The physical environment includes not only appropriate furnishings, such as tables and chairs, that allow children's feet to touch the floor but also appropriate room flooring and soft areas that are comforting to children. Regarding infant rooms: Shoe coverings are used to protect dedicated crawling spaces.
- 5.8 Drinking Water: Drinking water is adequately provided to the children as regulated by civil authorities (within 40 ft of indoor areas children use).
- 5.9 Accessible & Appropriate Sinks and Toilets: Toilets are readily accessible to both adults and children. The number of sinks and toilets (child-sized ones are recommended) must be in compliance with civil authorities and adequate for the number of children in attendance. (within 40 ft. of indoor areas children use). Bathrooms have barriers to prevent entry by unattended infants and toddlers.
- 5.10 Location and Adequacy of Lavatories: Sinks located in the area food services areas and near toilets are equipped with soap and paper towels, and accessible to both adults and children. Both adults and children should engage in regular hand washing and after toilet use, food prep/eating, outside activities, etc. (within 40 ft. of indoor areas children use).
- 5.11 Diapering of Infants and Toddlers: Staff check diapers regularly and change soiled or wet diapers/clothing immediately. Diaper changing procedures are posted at each changing station and gloves are used by staff during diapering. The diapering area is in good repair, located away from food preparation areas, is sanitized after each use, and is within arm's length of hand-washing sinks with running water and soap. If non-absorbent paper liners are used, they must be large enough to cover changing surface. A closeable, foot pedal-operated, plastic lined trash receptacle is located at each changing station., and soiled diapers are stored in a sealed container.
- 5.12 Director's Office: The facilities include appropriate office space for the director of the program.
- 5.13 Staff Meeting Room: The facilities include an appropriate area for staff meetings and breaks.
- 5.14 Storage Space: The facilities provide suitable storage space.
- 5.15 Adequate Outdoor Space: To accommodate the children's various play activities, the outdoor physical environment includes seventy-five square feet per child on the playground at any given time. Poisonous or potentially harmful plants are not in areas accessible to children. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. The program uses the techniques known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation.

- 5.16 Playground Equipment: Playground: Equipment is varied and sufficient for the number of children on the playground at the same time. The playground is designed and equipped to provide optimal learning experiences for children. All pieces of playground equipment are designed to match the body dimensions of children. Anchored equipment is not placed closer than six (6) feet from any hard, non-resilient surface, including fencing or another piece of play equipment. All elevated pieces of playground equipment are surrounded by a perimeter of resilient surface of an acceptable depth. All pieces of playground equipment are free of sharp edges, protruding parts, weaknesses, and flaws in material construction. Sandboxes are constructed to allow for drainage, covered when not in use, cleaned of foreign matter regularly, and sand is replaced as necessary.
- 5.17 Playground Supervision: Children are supervised at all times, and the child- adult ratio is maintained while the children are on the playground. To prevent drowning accidents, staff directly supervise all children by sight and sound in all areas with access to water in tubs, pails, and water tables.
- 5.18 Playground Safety, Security, and Protection: The program provides adequate protection for the play area, including fencing (or natural barriers – to prevent access to hazards), a balance of sun and shade space, and the area is entirely smoke-free.
- 5.19 Playground Surfaces: Wood chips, sand, and other cushioning materials of recommended depths are used under equipment such as swings and climbing apparatus, as recommended by civil authorities, manufacturer recommendations, and/or national playground safety standards. Equipment such as lofts are constructed to prevent falls or safety surfacing is installed in the fall zone.
- 5.20 Inspections and Repairs: Through routine inspections and resulting timely repairs, the outdoor play area is well maintained to prevent children from being injured by broken equipment, sharp edges, and rusty parts.
- 5.21 Substitute and Adequate Space Indoors for Large Group Play: When inclement weather/air pollution/excessive heat/elevated pollen index, etc., prevents children from playing outdoors, alternative activities are planned to ensure large-motor exercise and to foster large-motor development. Indoor equipment for large-motor skill development activities meets national safety standards and is supervised at the same level as outdoor equipment.
- 5.22 Maintenance of Buildings and Grounds: There is a process in place that ensures proper maintenance of the buildings, grounds, and equipment. Any body of water, including swimming pools, built-in wading pools, ponds, and irrigation ditches, is enclosed by a fence at least four (4) feet in height, with any gates childproofed to prevent entry by unattended children.
- 5.23 Classroom Pets: Classroom pets or visiting animals appear to be in good health. Pets or visiting animals have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and that animals are suitable for contact with children. Teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals. Program staff make sure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal. Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk for salmonella infection.

## **STANDARD 6 – HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**RATIONALE:** The early education program has a responsibility for the health, safety, and general welfare of each child in attendance. The staff should have continuing and required training in emergency first aid and in special medical needs in order to be alert and prepared for emergencies. Staff members need to be safety conscious with a view toward prevention (Caring for Our Children 2002).

- 6.1 Documentation of Inspections: Up-to-date, complete, and confidential health records for each child enrolled in the program are maintained in a safe and secure area and are available to authorized personnel. These files may include such information as the child's life history, developmental milestones, screening or assessment results, typical behaviors, and interests. Children in attendance are in compliance with the requirements of civil authorities regarding immunizations, physical examinations, and communicable diseases.
- 6.2 Children's Health Records: Up-to-date, complete, and confidential health records for each child enrolled in the program are maintained in a safe and secure area and are available to authorized personnel. These files may include such information as the child's life history, developmental milestones, screening or assessment results, typical behaviors, and interests. Children in attendance are in compliance with the requirements of civil authorities regarding immunizations, physical examinations, and communicable diseases.

- 6.3 Emergency Health and Security Information: Current emergency information is maintained for each child enrolled in the program, including expected attendance, parent/guardian contact information, people authorized to take the child off the premises, allergies, and other important health information.
- 6.4 Policies regarding illnesses: A written policy regarding the attendance of children who are ill, have been diagnosed with a contagious disease, or have been found to have a communicable condition has been developed and made available to parents/guardians. An isolation area is made available for ill or contagious children while they wait for someone to take them home. The school/center regularly communicates with local entities to keep current on relevant health information.
- 6.5 Special health needs of children: Staff are alerted to special health conditions/food allergies of children and are equipped, when applicable, to handle such concerns.
- 6.6 Administering and storing of medicines: A written policy that complies with the requirements of civil authorities for administering and storing medications has been developed and made available to the parents/guardians of the children in the program.
- 6.7 Medical Log: A detailed medical log is maintained that includes a record of all medications given to children, the time the medication was given, and the person administering the medication.
- 6.8 Blood-borne Pathogens: The program has developed policies and procedures to protect the staff and children from blood-borne pathogens by developing a blood-borne exposure control plan and by providing annual in-service to the staff regarding protective procedures. As a result, the staff use “universal precautions” when encountering children’s body fluids.
- 6.9 Cleanliness Requirements: Children and adults wash their hands after toileting, before eating or handling food, and as otherwise necessary to prevent the spread of disease.
- 6.10 Washing of Infant and Toddler Bedding: Infant and toddler bedding is washed at a minimum of twice per week and more often when soiled, and it is used by only one child between washings. Bedding used by preschoolers is washed a minimum of once per week and more often when soiled, and it is used by only one child between washings.
- 6.11 Health Screenings: The program makes visual, auditory, speech, language development, physical development, cognitive development, and other health screening assessments when available to the children, having the consent of their parent or guardian, in the program at least annually. There is a health/medical consultant available to the program for questions and advice. The health consultant observes program practices and reviews and makes recommendations about the program’s practices and written health policies to ensure health promotion and prevention of infection and injury. The consultation addresses physical, social-emotional, nutritional, and oral health, including the care and exclusion of ill children.
- 6.12 Supervision, Arrivals and Departures & Attendance: Children are supervised by sight at all times (or by electronic means if available during sleeping). Staff take necessary steps to correct or avoid unsafe conditions in school/center. Transition of children from one teacher to another or from one area to another is accounted for to ensure the supervision and whereabouts of children at all times. (This includes sleeping children, playgrounds, during food service, etc.) There are written procedures that address safe arrival and departure procedures that for all children (including those with disabilities is applicable). Procedures should include protocols for release of children to only authorized adults throughout the day and any special procedures needed in picking up children at the end of the day. Additionally, the center has a procedure for attendance to be taken that includes parents/guardians being required to sign the child in and out daily.
- 6.13 Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect: The staff is trained to recognize signs of child abuse and neglect. They know the laws and procedures for reporting to the appropriate agency. All communications with authorities are documented and placed in a confidential file. Exemplary abuse prevention is practiced throughout the early education program. For example, a minimum of two teachers are assigned to a group of children. Viewing windows allow for visual access into the classrooms, bathroom doors are left open, and random walk-throughs are practiced throughout the day. The program also has written procedures to be followed if a staff member is accused of abuse or neglect of a child in the program that protect the rights of the accused staff person as well as protect the children in the program.

- 6.14 Policies and Procedures to Eliminate Child Abuse: The program has a written plan for reporting and managing any incident of unusual occurrence that is threatening to the health, safety, or welfare of the children or staff.
- 6.15 Providing Extra Clothing for Children: Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a change of clothing for their children to keep on the program's premises in the case of an accident, suitable for outdoor play. The program maintains a supply of generic clothing in varying sizes to ensure children are provided with a change of clothing in case of an emergency. In the event of an emergency/accident, staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or for removing smeared fecal matter.
- 6.16 CPR/First Aid Certified Personnel: At least one staff member with first aid certification—and infant/child CPR certification will be present on the premises at all times. 90% of staff are certified in Pediatric CPR and Pediatric First Aid. At least one person on site is designated as responsible for health and safety issues at all times.
- 6.17 First Aid Supplies: The program maintains adequate first aid supplies and a universal precaution kit that are conveniently available to the classrooms but not to the children. The program maintains a detailed medical log regarding the use of these items.
- 6.18 Written Record of Accidents and Illnesses: A written notice of accidents and/or illnesses is kept on file, and a copy is given to the parents/guardians of the children in the program.
- 6.19 Emergency Preparedness Plans: The program has a general disaster plan and/or an Emergency Crisis Manual that includes evacuation procedures and inside actions in the event of a disaster or crisis (e.g., snowstorm, tornado, lightning, flooding, fire, bomb threat, violence, and hostage situation). The plan includes directions for disasters common to the geographic area. Staff members are familiar with routes and procedures, which are posted in each classroom, and staff regularly practice drills with the children. Such plan should be reviewed periodically by the local law enforcement, emergency personnel, and conform to that recommended by the Office of Homeland Security.
- 6.20 Fire Extinguishers and Detectors: Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are provided and checked as mandated by the local fire marshal, and staff is trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- 6.21 Emergency Phone Numbers: Emergency phone numbers or 911 is posted by readily accessible telephones that have 911 access in order to allow for quick reference in contacting the fire department, police department, poison center, and rescue squad.
- 6.22 Notifying Parents and Guardians in Emergencies: A plan is in place to contact parents/guardians in case of an emergency closing, and the parents/guardians have been made aware of the plan.
- 6.23 Proper Chemical Labeling and Storage: All chemicals, medicines, and other “dangerous if swallowed” materials are stored in their original containers. All potentially dangerous products are stored in a locked area. An MSD (Material Safety Data) sheet is strategically placed near harmful chemicals. . Additionally, the program has written procedures to protect children and adults from environmental hazards, such as air pollution, lead and asbestos (according to public health requirements).
- 6.24 Vehicle Inspection, Permits, and Qualified Drivers: Current documentation is available on all vehicle safety inspections, insurance, driver qualifications, and trainings. All requirements of civil authorities and all specific vehicle transportation requirements are being met.
- 6.25 Vehicles with Restraining Devices, Emergency Equipment & Alarms: Vehicles are equipped with age-appropriate restraint device, first aid kit, and have alarms installed. Appropriate safety precautions are taken when children are being transported.
- 6.26 Transportation Policies and Procedures: The program has written transportation policies and procedures that ensure the supervision of all children at all times and thus promote the safety of the children. These are shared with parents/guardians and implemented by the program. The policies and procedures must include that permission is attained from parents/guardians and that roll checks are logged before, regularly during, and upon return to the program's facilities. Field trip information is shared with parents in advance of the event and has written permission from parents for transportation. Written procedures should be in place for children with disabilities (as needed).



- 6.27 Cleanliness of Facilities: The facilities are cleaned on a daily basis, including sanitizing the bathrooms (toilet seats, toilet handles, toilet bowls, doorknobs, cubicle handles, etc.), mopping/sanitizing floors (immediately if visibly soiled), sanitize potty chairs after each use (if in use) and removing trash. If sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food. The facilities are free of mold and offensive odor. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on school/center premises.
- 6.28 Sanitizing Toys and Equipment: The program has an established plan of sanitizing toys and equipment regularly (infants: daily, toddlers: semiweekly, preschoolers: weekly—with all three groups of toys and equipment receiving more frequent sanitization as needed to maintain a healthy environment for the children).
- 6.29 Hot Water Conditions/Hot Liquid Access: Hot water heaters are set for 110°F or less if the heated water is accessible to children. Liquids and foods that are hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit are kept out of children's reach.
- 6.30 Safe Electrical Outlets: Electrical outlets in the wall are covered to prevent children from being shocked by electricity.
- 6.31 Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): Infants, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, are placed on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. (This indicator is required of all programs with infants.) Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in cribs or rest equipment for Infants younger than eight months. If a blanket is used, the infant is placed at the foot of the crib with a thin blanket tucked around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the infant's chest. The infant's head remains uncovered during sleep. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position.

## **STANDARD 7 – FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**RATIONALE:** Parents are a child's first teacher, and the early education program respects the critical role parents play in supporting the growth and development of their child. Partnerships with parents are a part of a quality early education program. A rapport is built between staff and parents, which supports communication between the home and the early education program.

- 7.1 Public Relations: All informational sources established by the program accurately describe the early education program, including its enrollment policy, mission, and statement of nondiscrimination and satisfied consumer protection requirements as established by state, Federal law or Administrative Rule. The program leadership and staff seek to build mutual relationships and communicate the mission, vision, and core values with close neighbors, informing them about the program, seeking out their perspectives, involving them in the program when appropriate, and cooperating with them on neighborhood interests and needs.
- 7.2 Parent/Guardian Handbook: Contents and Communication: Parents/guardians of the children in the program receive a parent/guardian handbook that includes but is not limited to the philosophy statement regarding the care and education of young children attending the program, assessment techniques, discipline techniques, policies regarding holidays, illnesses, hours of operation, fees, refunds, enrollment, and termination procedures, grievance and due process procedures, and an explanation of the program's day-to-day functioning. Parents/guardians sign a statement acknowledging that they understand and support the program's policies as outlined in the parent/guardian handbook. Additionally, the handbook is made available in a substitute language or is translated as necessary.
- 7.3 Visitation Rights: The program has an open-door policy regarding visits by parents/guardians on the program's premises, including in their child's classroom. Policies concerning parent/guardian involvement (e.g., visiting, observing, and volunteering) are in place to ensure the partnership between home and program is maintained.
- 7.4 Communication with Parents/Guardians: Administrators and staff communicate with the parents/guardians in a variety of ways on a regular basis—daily and weekly by verbal communication or posted information and monthly by newsletter and/or classroom calendar of events, or through evolving electronic means. Regular communication allows the teachers to engage the student in social, linguistic, and cultural context of their family dynamics.

- 7.5 General Conferences about their Children: Conferences with each child's parent(s)/guardian are offered at least twice per year—and at other times as needed—to discuss the child's developmental progress, personal care, and education. Conference schedules accommodate working parents/guardians.
- 7.6 Conferences Regarding the Child's Development Progress: Parents/guardians of the children in the program receive communication regarding their children's developmental progress at least twice per year. During parent/guardian conferences, summaries of the results of child observation forms used during scheduled observations of the child are shared with parents/guardians, and parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in the goal-setting process for the child. Specifically, when a child is "aging out" of the school/center's program, a transition conference is held to ensure the child's move to the new school is effective.
- 7.7 Reporting of Significant Changes in Behavior: Significant changes in a child's pattern of behavior and/or physical condition are reported to the parent(s)/guardian(s), documented, and placed in the child's file.
- 7.8 Parent Training Programs: The program director plans and implements regularly scheduled parent/guardian programs and events that support parents/guardians in their parenting role, reinforce the mission of the program and connects the school/center's families together. These programs take place at least quarterly.
- 7.9 Community Resources: The director and staff are familiar with their community's urban, suburban, rural, or tribal cultural services and resources regarding children/families and connect parents/guardians to these services and resources. The director and staff work collaboratively with community agencies in providing information as needed. Resources include, but are not limited to, academic, ethnic, cultural, artistic, athletic, health services, human services, etc. Families are informed about community events sponsored by local organizations, such as museum exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater intended for children, when those events align with the center's mission, vision, and core values.
- 7.10 Advocacy for Center within Community: The program leadership and staff advocate for the program and its families by creating awareness of the program's needs among community councils, service agencies, and local government entities. The program leadership encourages the staff and families to work together to participate in and support community improvements through advocacy projects. The program staff also engage with community organizations and groups to cosponsor or participate in cultural events to enrich the experience of children and families in the program, when and if the events align with the center's mission, vision, and core values.
- 7.11 Community Engagement within Center: The center leadership and staff research opportunities and invite members of the performing and visual arts community, such as musical performers, coordinators of traveling museum exhibits, local artists, and community residents to share their interests and talents with the children, when and if the opportunities align with the center's mission, vision, and core values.

### **Gold Seal Survey Requirements:**

Data collection from stakeholders is vital to the overall analysis of a school's program. Surveys allow the stakeholder to respond with candor, honest opinion, and freedom to remain anonymous. All surveys will be completed via Google Form through a link sent by the ACTS Office that will populate to the Accreditation Team's folder for analysis and summary. The Google Link for the Staff and Board Member Survey will be sent from the ACTS office. The Google Link for the Parent/Guardian Survey will be sent to the Director/Head of school to be sent to the parents/guardians. In the event email is not the best option, the administrator, the Team Chair, and the ACTS office will determine the best option for data collection. Responses from the Survey will be provided to the early childhood program administration with a summary included in the final evaluation report.

#### **Survey One: Teachers**

All early care and education personnel are expected to work closely with the administration in the on-going efforts to ensure collaboration and good relations that will promote a high-quality educational program. Through the Teacher/Caregiver/Staff Survey, all early care and education teachers, caregivers and staff are given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the program and work environment.

#### **Survey Two: Parents**

All parents/legal guardians of children enrolled in the early care and education program are given the opportunity to complete a survey in which they are asked to evaluate the quality of the program.

#### **Survey Three: Stakeholders (Administration, Board Members, Investors, Church Members, etc.)**

All early care and education program stakeholders are given the opportunity to complete a survey in which they are asked to evaluate the quality of program administration.

## CHAPTER 6: ACTS-WASC ACCREDITATION PROTOCOLS K12 & K-12+Addendums

**NOTE: All WASC Related Documents will be available via WASC Portal**

### **Overall Objectives of the Self-Study Process:**

- Identification of strengths and opportunities for growth
- Critical analysis of the entire school program with the goal of continued improvement
- Involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the analysis of the school program.
- Clarification and alignment of the school's purpose with expected educational outcomes.
- Assessment of the school's operations and its impact on student learning with respect to the accreditation standards and the school wide learner outcomes.
- Creating a School-Wide Improvement Plan that:
  - Leverages data to construct a realistic plan with a series of goals, objectives, and benchmarks to help with accountability and monitoring growth in identified areas for improvement.
  - Combines subject-area/program and support strategies to address identified growth gaps.
  - Establishes an accountability mechanism for monitoring success, needs for adjustment, increased opportunities for growth.

### **Process of creating the Self-Study:**

- Roles & Accountability:
  - The school's leadership should define roles and responsibilities for the process among the faculty and staff of the school. Some administrators appoint a self-study coordinator while others choose to manage the project themselves. Whichever is chosen, make sure all stakeholders are involved in the process.
- Timeline:
  - There are multiple timelines that need to be created to ensure a successful completion
  - A general calendar for the major self-study events
  - A more detailed timeline of specific committee meetings and tasks to be accomplished.
  - The self-study coordinator should work backwards from the date of the visit to ensure the self-study is completed 30 days prior to the team's arrival.
- Focus Group/Task Forces/Committees:
  - Create a structure of collaboration between all stakeholders to ensure the entire school body is represented in the self-study process. Committee selection should focus on expertise, sphere of influence, and time allotment. Some committees will need to meet more frequently than others. Types of committees:
    - Standards Based - each standard or systematic grouping of standards are assigned to specific groups.
    - Department Based - Each department reads through each standard and determines how their department interacts with that standard.

## **Self-Study Instructions:**

### **Task 1 Instructions:**

This section is designed to give the Visiting Team, the Accreditation Commission and the Board of Directors a “snapshot” of your school and its foundations. In some cases, the information discovered leads the school to evaluate its instructional program, revise Foundation Statements, etc. Numeric and percentage data may be presented in table, infographic, chart form, if you choose to. If your school does not track specific data points requested, simply explain the reason, and give estimates of the data.

### **Task 2 & 3 Instructions:**

This section will most likely take the most time to complete as *it's the most important part*. Each Accreditation Standard has Indicators that address more specific areas of that standard. Those Indicators have been written into Prompt & Response Form for your convenience and ease of answering effectively.

- The length of response to each prompt should be as long as is necessary to properly articulate the answer. Some responses will be longer than others.
- Some responses may be in bulleted form, while others may be in narrative form. The choice is yours on which is necessary and proper for each prompt.
- Keep in mind that your response is never a simple “yes” or “no” or “See pg. 4 of the Student handbook.” It is always the elaboration of those items, knowledge, and/or understanding that is expected.

For each Indicator, review and analyze how the school program/operations/policies fit with the expectations the indicator:

- If the expectations of the indicator **are met**, summarize how the school is meeting the expectations.
- If the expectations of the indicator **are mostly met or are not met**, explain how the school will meet the expectations, including resources, timeframe, and needed logistics.

### **Task 4 Instructions:**

This section is for schools that are renewing their accreditation after an initial 6-year accreditation term with ACTS. If you are renewing your accreditation, this section is to be completed with the following information:

- A complete list of Directives left by the most recent Visiting Team.
- An explanation of how the school has completed each Directive, including how the school intends to ensure continued alignment with that Indicator.

### **Supporting Documentation:**

It is vital that you upload the documents that are listed below each standard. Failure to do so will cause the Visiting Team to spend extra time researching information while on site rather than prior to arriving. Upload the document into the corresponding Standard’s folder.

## **Self-study Procedures and Standards**

### **TASK 1: Student/Community Profile**

Directions: In the profile, provide the information given below (include findings, appropriate charts, tables and graphs when possible). Analyze the student achievement data. Provide a summary of the implications of the demographic, achievement, and any perception data, noting important needs of the students with respect to learning and important questions for all stakeholders to discuss throughout the self-study process.

#### **Task 1A: School History and Demographics**

##### **History:**

Describe the formation of the school, mission, vision, core values, and purpose.

##### **Current School Leadership:**

Head of School, Other members of Administration, Office Staff members, School Board Members

##### **Community Demographics:**

- What is the makeup of the general population of your surrounding community?
- What is the economic status of your surrounding community?
- What other educational opportunities (similar to your school/center) are in your surrounding community?
- What are the major issues unique to your area (social, economical, educational, etc.)?

##### **Current Student Data:**

- Currently, how many students at each age/grade level are enrolled at the school/center?
- Over the last three years, what has been the school's total enrollment each year and enrollment per grade level?
- Over the last three years, what percentage of that year's student body re-enrolled for the next school year?
- What is the total percentage of each ethnicity represented at the school/center?
- What is the percentage of male to female students at your school/center?
- What student assistance programs does the school participate in? (Title 1, VPK, School Readiness, Federal Food Programs, State Scholarship/Voucher Programs/Opportunity Scholarship, etc.)
- Does the school offer Dual Enrollment options for High School students?
  - If yes, how many students participate in the program?
  - If yes, are the classes taken on your campus, at a nearby college campus, or online?
- Does the school offer a la carte courses for non-traditional students (i.e. Homeschool, Credit Recovery, etc.)?
- Does the school offer any type of Vocational Education, Internships, Apprenticeship Programs?
- Does the school participate in any type of International Student program?
  - If yes, how many students participate in the program?
  - If yes, what countries are represented?
- What Missions opportunities does the school provide for students (any and/or all grade levels)?
- If your school is sponsored by a church, what percentage of your student enrollment attend the sponsoring church?

##### **Student Follow-up Data (If Applicable):**

- Show percentages for students' activity after Graduation: US Military Service, Work Force, Trade Schools/Technical Colleges, Community Colleges, Four-year Colleges/Universities
- List all trade schools/technical colleges, community colleges, four-year college/universities, and branch of Military service attended/joined for the past three years.

## **TASK 2: School Purpose and Schoolwide Learner Outcomes**

Directions: When crafting your responses of the analysis of the school's purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes using the ACTS/WASC standards keep these questions in mind:

- What are the current learning needs of the students?
- What are the challenges that students will be facing in the future?
- What competencies should students possess when they pursue postsecondary education/training and the world of work?

Summarize the findings based on the questions/analysis for the Standard and support with evidence. Also determine the strengths and growth areas for the Standard.

### **Task 2A: K12 Standards**

Refer to K-12 Standards

### **Task 2B: PreK/Early Childhood Education Addendum Standards**

Refer to PreK/Early Childhood Addendum Standards

### **Task 2C: Digital/Distance Education Addendum Standards**

Refer to Digital/Distance Addendum Standards

## **TASK 3: Schoolwide Action Plan**

Directions: Summarize progress on schoolwide action plan that incorporated the critical areas for follow-up from prior self-study/visit and respond to the questions below:

- What have been significant developments since the prior self-study/visit?
- Describe the follow-up process for the following:
  - Annual review and analysis of progress on Action Plan sections
  - Analysis of the impact on student learning based on the schoolwide learner outcomes
  - Refinement and modification of the Schoolwide Action Plan annually
- Comment on the accomplishment of each current schoolwide action plan section
  - Cite evidence, including how each area section has contributed to student learning of the schoolwide learner outcomes.
  - Comment on the relationship of the action plan sections and the critical areas of follow-up from the prior self-study/visit.
- Comment on those recommendations that are no longer in the current Schoolwide Action Plan or were originally addressed separately.

## **TASK 4: Completion of Previous Directives**

**For Renewal Schools Only** – Refer to the directives from the school's last site visit/Accreditation Report. Please give a narrative response to each on how the directive was accomplished.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHER AND SCHOOLS STATEMENT OF FAITH**

- We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS**

*These are nonnegotiable tenets of faith to which all Assemblies of God churches adhere.*

*This list is derived from the official Statement of Fundamental Truths.*

1. WE BELIEVE...The Scriptures are Inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind.
2. WE BELIEVE...There is only One True God—revealed in three persons...Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (commonly known as the Trinity).
3. WE BELIEVE...In the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's son Jesus was both human and divine.
4. WE BELIEVE...though originally good, Man Willingly Fell to Sin—ushering evil and death, both physical and spiritual, into the world.
5. WE BELIEVE...Every Person Can Have Restored Fellowship with God Through 'Salvation' (trusting Christ, through faith and repentance, to be our personal Savior). [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
6. WE BELIEVE...and practice two ordinances—(1) Water Baptism by Immersion after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's gift of salvation, and (2) Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.
7. WE BELIEVE...the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Special Experience Following Salvation that empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times. [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
8. WE BELIEVE... The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is 'Speaking in Tongues,' as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.
9. WE BELIEVE...Sanctification Initially Occurs at Salvation and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive lifelong process of separating from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christ like.
10. WE BELIEVE...The Church has a Mission to seek and save all who are lost in sin. We believe 'the Church' is the Body of Christ and consists of the people who, throughout time, have accepted God's offer of redemption (regardless of religious denomination) through the sacrificial death of His son Jesus Christ.
11. WE BELIEVE...A Divinely Called and Scripturally Ordained Leadership Ministry Serves the Church. The Bible teaches that each of us under leadership must commit ourselves to reach others for Christ, to worship Him with other believers, to build up or edify the body of believers—the Church and to meet human need with ministries of love and compassion.
12. WE BELIEVE...Divine Healing of the Sick is a Privilege for Christians Today and is provided for in Christ's atonement (His sacrificial death on the cross for our sins). [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
13. WE BELIEVE...in The Blessed Hope—When Jesus Raptures His Church Prior to His Return to Earth (the second coming). At this future moment in time all believers who have died will rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air, and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them, to be with the Lord forever. [1 of 4 cardinal doctrines of the AG]
14. WE BELIEVE...in The Millennial Reign of Christ when Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace.
15. WE BELIEVE...A Final Judgment Will Take Place for those who have rejected Christ. They will be judged for their sin and consigned to eternal punishment in a punishing lake of fire.
16. WE BELIEVE...and look forward to the perfect New Heavens and a New Earth that Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him. We will live and dwell with Him there forever following His millennial reign on Earth. 'And so shall we forever be with the Lord!'

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES**

- We believe that God calls us to His ministry. (Heb. 5:4)
- We believe that God has given each of us the responsibility of training up the youth of today. (Deut. 6:6-9)
- We believe that there is one head of the Church and our ministry, Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:22)
- We believe that without the power of the Holy Spirit in us we can do nothing to glorify God. (Acts 1:8 & Zach. 4:6)
- We believe that love is the greatest gift that the Spirit can give us and only through God's love and grace to us can we succeed. (Heb 13:9)
- We believe that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God and that we are to study and follow them. (1 Tim. 4:13)
- We believe that Jesus Christ is central to all that we do in our lives and ministry. (2 Cor. 4:5)
- We believe in the rapture of the Church who will again come in glory at Jesus' return. (Titus 2:13)
- We believe that this ministry was conceived by the Spirit of God and will only last if we follow Him and not our own desires (2 Cor. 3:5-6)
- We believe that without the love of God dwelling in us that we can do no good thing. (John 13:35)
- We believe that as followers of our Lord Jesus we should also strive to be the best that we can in the field of education and training. (2 Tim 2:15)
- We believe that God will bless this ministry if it is in His will and without His guidance and blessing it will cease to exist. (Heb. 11:6)