



Accreditation

MEASURING THE MISSION

A School Improvement Framework for Christian Schools

**STANDARDS AND INDICATORS
Second Edition – 2012**

Strand 1. Leading with Purpose (Assurances)

The Christian school, as an enterprise of the entire community, enables and equips all of its students to love God, to serve their fellow human beings, and to care for God's creation. The school community provides an environment of love and care within which students are nurtured. As an indispensable partner with the home and the church, the Christian school leads children to live according to biblical wisdom. To do all this, great Christian schools have a number of organizational documents, policies, procedures, and structures in place. Strand 1 is a list of organizational assurances. Christian schools must be able to certify compliance with these assurances.

Standard 1.1: Mission and Vision

Every Christian school should have these three documents:

- A **statement of faith** that articulates the school's foundational principles. The school's statement of faith and /or philosophy are generally articulated in the bylaws or constitution; a Christian school must always be rooted in the Word of God.
- A **mission statement** that is a short declaration of what the school says it is, or why it exists. This document is sometimes called the purpose.
- A set of **educational goals** developed from the statement of faith, philosophy statement and/or the mission statement that direct the school's work.

Often a step between the philosophy statement and the mission statement is a **vision statement** that includes a vivid word-picture of how the world will be different and what the school's graduates will look like, when the school is properly doing its job.

God's Word → Statement of Faith → Philosophy Statement → Vision Statement → Mission Statement → Educational Goals

Indicators for Standard 1.1

1.1.1 Established and transformational: The school has a written philosophy statement or statement of faith that is founded upon the Word of God and that clearly articulates the school's beliefs regarding education.

1.1.2 Communicated: The statement of faith, philosophy statement, and mission statement are articulated frequently and in a variety of ways so that the entire school family and community capture the vision of education from a biblical perspective.

1.1.3 Integration of mission into practice: The board and staff write goals and strategies to guide the future improvement of the school. These goals and strategies are rooted in the statement of faith, philosophy statement, and the mission statement.

1.1.4 Integration of mission into programs: The program content offerings made available to students at all levels demonstrate a clear connection to the school's mission and vision. Program outcomes are rooted in the statement of faith, philosophy statement and mission statement.

1.1.5 Educational goals: The school has articulated written goals or outcomes for student learning as a separate document, or as part of the curricula, or as part of its vision.

Standard 1.2: Governance

The Christian community, through the structure of a separate school society/association or through the structure of a church, assigns the responsibility for governing the school to a board or governing body, which it elects or appoints. The governing body is accountable to God, from whom it derives authority, and to the community, to which it is responsible. The governing body is responsible for the provision of resources, finances, and facilities necessary for the school to accomplish its mission. The governing body also promotes the school's mission to those in the school family and to the rest of the community.

Indicators for Standard 1.2

1.2.1 By-Laws or constitution: The bylaws or constitution mandate a designated governing body to hold the school in trust for both God and the community and to establish policies for the school. The bylaws prohibit conflicts of interest and mandate ethical standards of operation.

1.2.2 Policies and job descriptions: Written documents (policy and job descriptions) delineate the duties of both the governing body and the school's chief administrator to ensure good organization and Christian community.

1.2.3 Legal requirements: The school meets all legal requirements for existence as a school including incorporation within the province or state, tax exempt status, and all other federal, provincial/state, or local regulations.

1.2.4 Non-discrimination: The school has a non-discrimination policy stating that it does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national or ethnic origin in employment practices, administrative policies, scholarship and loan programs, or other school-administered programs and activities. This policy is published regularly.

1.2.5 Board member qualifications: Policies or bylaws clearly describe the qualifications of those serving on the governing body, including a strong Christian faith commitment and a demonstrated walk with Jesus Christ.

1.2.6 Written policies: A handbook of policies is kept, reviewed, and updated regularly. These policies guide the governing body's work and the school's operation.

1.2.7 Self-evaluation: The governing body regularly evaluates how it functions and makes revisions to its policies and practices when necessary.

Standard 1.3: Fiscal Responsibilities

Proper financial management enables a school's governing body and administration to provide the necessary resources to meet the school's mission and for the faculty to teach God's children well. The governing board, in keeping with the spirit of God's Word, must make certain that the staff is adequately paid, that the resources are available for the teaching staff to provide a quality Christian education, and that the bills are paid in a timely manner. The governing body must ensure that the school is operated efficiently, that tuition remains reasonable, and that families who cannot afford the full cost of a Christian education for their children are assisted. Members of the governing body must be stewards of the resources provided by God and the Christian community as they serve with Christ-like integrity.

Indicators for Standard 3

1.3.1 Integration of mission into finances: The priorities evident in the school's annual budget reflect the school's mission and goals.

1.3.2 Balanced budget: A balanced annual budget is prepared in consultation with the administration and staff, approved by the governing body, properly monitored by the chief administrator and his or her staff, and is part of a multi-year plan.

1.3.3 Resource development: The governing body, in collaboration with the administration, is responsible for generating the funds and resources, or seeing to it that the funds and resources are generated, necessary to effectively operate a high quality Christian education program that honors the name of Jesus Christ.

1.3.4 Policies and procedures: Financial record keeping policies and procedures are clearly written and followed. These include:

- how and by whom funds are handled,
- a check and balance system for members of the governing body and staff who handle funds,

- the keeping of backup files,
- the protection of confidentiality for tuition payers, donors, and financial aid recipients,
- timely receipt-reporting to tuition payers and donors,
- required reporting by law to the province or state and Revenue Canada or the Internal Revenue Service,
- monthly financial statements generated for internal use, annual reporting to the appropriate constituencies, and all other reports mandated by the governing body,
- an annual audit or review of the financial books by qualified accountants or auditors who are not members of the governing body or the school staff.

1.3.5 Fund-raising/record-keeping/audit: All fundraising and resource development activities of the school are conducted in a legal, ethical, and professional manner. The financial books of these activities and groups are included in the annual review and periodic audit of the school's financial activities.

1.3.6 Tuition collection and tuition assistance: An effective and fair tuition collection procedure is in place, including steps to be taken if families become delinquent in payment. The school also has a tuition assistance program in place to assist families who have difficulty paying tuition or who wish to provide a Christian education for their children but are financially unable to do so.

1.3.7 Insurance: The school maintains sufficient insurance or internal resources to protect itself against liability claims, work interruptions, and errors and omissions by staff, board members and volunteers.

Standard 1.4: All Staff Members—Faculty and Support

A Christian school's most important resource is an excellent staff. These are the people who provide the children and young people with a high quality Christian education and assist parents in nurturing them to Christian adulthood and service. A Christian school must be very careful and intentional about whom it hires to work with its children and young people. Administrators clearly follow procedures that assure that only the best teachers and support staff are hired and the governing body helps this process with policies and resource development. A great school has clearly defined qualifications for teachers and support staff, provides professional development for continued growth of all staff members, and develops a helpful, research-based evaluation process that assures God's children and young people are receiving only the best in instruction and faith nurture.

Indicators for Standard 1.4

1.4.1 Staff commitment to Christ: Personal qualifications of staff members include evidence of a personal commitment of faith and a daily walk with Jesus Christ.

1.4.2 Background check of new hires: All incoming staff members are required to undergo a criminal history check, an unprofessional conduct check, health screenings as required by law, and all other legal procedures necessary for employment in a school in the province or state.

1.4.3 Head administrator qualifications: The head administrator, charged with leading the school, is qualified to do so. Board policy clearly defines the qualifications of the head administrator including an understanding of Christ-centered education and a demonstrated commitment to a daily walk with Jesus Christ.

1.4.4 Head administrator job description and evaluation: The head administrator's job description is realistic and clearly defined. The head administrator is regularly evaluated by the governing body, based upon goals developed from the job description, as well as personal and professional goals approved by the governing body that are aligned with the school's mission and school improvement plan.

1.4.5 Teacher qualifications: All professional teachers meet the hiring requirements of the school board including an understanding of Christ-centered education and a demonstrated commitment to a daily walk with Jesus Christ. Minimally, each teacher must possess a degree from an accredited college or university in the academic area in which they are hired to teach.

Generally teachers are certified by the state in which they are teaching, or they are in a program to attain this certification. Teachers may also be certified by another state or a Christian organization like ACSI.

Non-certified teachers submit an annual plan to the building administrator to show professional staff development of at least twenty clock hours during each school year. Approved activities may include, but are not limited to Christian distinctives workshops or courses, academic coursework, seminars, conferences, mentoring, book study, professional learning community conversations, and on-line classes. These plans are updated annually and submitted by the accredited school with its Annual Accreditation Report to Christian Schools International.

1.4.6 Induction/coaching/mentoring: Each new staff member participates in an extensive induction program prior to beginning work. A mentor or coach with common or similar responsibilities is assigned to each new staff member and maintains a mentoring relationship over time.

Standard 1.5 : Student Health and Safety

A Christian school is a healthy and safe place for students. Christian schools and administrators are constantly vigilant for health and safety issues and align the school's health and safety policies and procedures with state/provincial and local health and safety regulations.

Indicators for Standard 1.5

1.5.1 Student health compliance: The school complies with all applicable provincial or state health codes including:

- health and immunization records,
- communicable diseases,
- proper inventory and storing of dangerous substances, chemicals, and cleaning supplies,
- kitchen/dining area regulations and food services,
- safety drills (for example: fire, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, hostage)
- student physicals for admissions or physical activities participation,
- health screenings
- all physical facilities are in compliance with federal, provincial/state, and local regulations, including such things as health and safety codes, asbestos management, barrier-free access, fire extinguishers, and posted emergency procedures.

1.5.2 Student safety compliance: Adequate safety procedures are in place including:

- sexual and physical abuse policies,
- anti-bullying policies,
- traffic control and crossing patrols,
- playground supervision,
- transportation,
- in-school supervision,
- first aid/CPR and bloodborne pathogen training for staff,
- pick-up and dismissal,
- custodial and non-custodial parent guidelines,
- crisis response procedures (addressing national and local emergencies)

Strand 2. Teaching for Learning

Standard 2.1

Curriculum: Schools have a written, cohesive plan for instruction and the learning of all its students that serves as the basis for instruction.

Indicator 2.1.1

Articulated: The written curriculum is designed to ensure a continuum of content and skills within and across grade levels and content areas.

Indicator 2.1.2

Biblical perspective: A biblically informed curriculum points to God as the source of all truth, leads students toward biblical wisdom and a response to God's call to discipleship, and nurtures all students toward Christ-like living.

Indicator 2.1.3

Aligned to standards: The local curriculum is aligned to national or state/provincial standards for student achievement, or to another set of recognized standards that are consistent with the school's mission and educational goals.

Indicator 2.1.4

Curriculum review: The school's curriculum is reviewed and revised systematically and regularly. There is a structure and process for the involvement of all appropriate stakeholders to participate in the review.

Standard 2.2

Instruction: Teachers are intentional about the use of processes that facilitate and result in high levels of learning for all students.

Indicator 2.2.1

Planning for learning—content appropriateness: Classroom lesson content is aligned with the school's written curriculum. Careful planning by the faculty ensures that the curriculum content integrates a biblical perspective and advances through the grade levels without gaps or unnecessary redundancies.

Indicator 2.2.2

Planning for learning—learner appropriate/differentiation: Instructional planning focuses on individual student success by considering faith development, learning styles, aptitudes, cultural differences, and interests.

Indicator 2.2.3

Educational support services: Educational support services are in place to meet the learning, social, and emotional needs of all students who are enrolled in the school.

Indicator 2.2.4

Planning for learning—reflection and refinement: Teachers work individually and collaboratively to gather and analyze information to continually modify and improve their instruction.

Indicator 2.2.5

Delivery of curriculum—best practices: The faculty is aware that some instructional approaches and methods have demonstrated effectiveness based upon current learning research; these are called best practices. Teachers use these best practices to design learning experiences and inform their own professional development.

Indicator 2.2.6

Delivery of curriculum—student engagement: Teachers design lessons and assessments that engage their students and promote active learning in the context of the school’s mission and educational goals. High-level thinking skills are employed across all curricular areas. Cross-curricular integrated units enable students to view God’s world holistically and apply their growing knowledge in multiple ways.

Standard 2.3

Assessment: The school systematically gathers and uses multiple sources of evidence to monitor student achievement and the meeting of the school’s educational goals and purpose.

Indicator 2.3.1

Aligned to curriculum and instruction: Assessments are aligned to the curriculum and match the targeted student outcome (examples: knowledge, reasoning, skill, product, or disposition).

Indicator 2.3.2

Valid, reliable, and bias free: The school assures that assessments are valid (measure what they are supposed to measure), reliable (yield the same results from repeated trials), and free of bias.

Indicator 2.3.3

Multiple measures: The school uses a variety of formative and summative assessments including standardized tests, benchmark assessments, culminating assessments, and common assessments.

Indicator 2.3.4

Informs instruction: Teachers systematically modify their instruction and the school’s curriculum based on review of the assessment data.

Indicator 2.3.5

Sharing results: Assessment results are reported to and used collaboratively by teachers, administrators, and parents to revise instruction, provide interventions, improve achievement, and encourage the formation of children’s and young people’s faith.

Strand 3. Leading for Learning

Standard 3.1

Instructional Leadership: School leaders create and sustain a climate for all students to learn and develop their faith.

Indicator 3.1.1

Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment and faith development: The school's leaders have expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and faith development and are able to model these in the classroom. They have opportunities to share their expertise in these areas with the school community and beyond.

Indicator 3.1.2

Focus on student results: School leaders base school improvement decisions on data.

Indicator 3.1.3

Integration and use of technology: All staff members use technology for communication, instruction, and information management. They guide their students in the effective, ethical, and discerning use of technology based on the school's mission and educational goals.

Indicator 3.1.4

Planned results: The school improvement plan reflects the school's commitment to continuous improvement. It contains measurable educational performance goals that reflect the vision and the mission of the school.

Indicator 3.1.5

Accountability and evaluation: School leaders collaborate in a planned manner with teachers to define and evaluate classroom effectiveness and individual professional goals that are rooted in the school's improvement plan and lead toward improved instruction and student faith development.

Indicator 3.1.6

Collaboration: School leaders promote and facilitate dialogue and collaboration that is aligned with the school's mission, refines the goals for student learning, and support a culture of continuous improvement.

Standard 3.2

Teacher as Leader: Teachers as well as administrators have responsibilities for leadership in the classroom and in the school.

Indicator 3.2.1

Sufficient instructional staff: Leaders recruit and retain sufficient qualified faculty (see indicator 1.4.5.) and staff to provide students with a high quality Christian education. Faculty and staff are recruited and hired to enhance the capacity of the school to achieve its mission and goals.

Indicator 3.2.2

Content knowledge: Teachers are competent to teach in their content area and/or grade level and maintain their knowledge and skills through participation in frequent professional development opportunities. They are asked by those in the school and beyond to share what they have learned and their expertise. They understand how to unfold God's truth in their content area and help students connect their head, heart, and hands in engaging ways.

Indicator 3.2.3

Personal faith expression: Teachers model their faith to their students with passion and authenticity, encouraging the faith development of their students. They seek to deepen their own faith. Administrators encourage personal faith expressions by the teachers.

Indicator 3.2.4

Communication: Accurate, regular, and direct communication between administration, staff, students, and parents is a high priority.

Standard 3.3

Learning for Leading: Teachers and administrators make professional development a priority in order to positively impact student achievement.

Indicator 3.3.1

Applies curriculum content: Curriculum content is a priority of professional development. Staff participation in professional development results in improved delivery of the curriculum content.

Indicator 3.3.2

Results-driven: Professional development initiatives are evaluated based on implementation of the curriculum, changes in instruction, and impact on student achievement and faith development. Professional development is strategically aligned with the school's improvement plan, mission, and vision.

4. Learning in Community

Standard 4.1

Nurturing and Caring for Students: Understanding that every child and young person is a unique image bearer of God, the Christian school personalizes the nurture and care it provides for students.

Indicator 4.1.1

School and classroom behavioral management: A school-wide behavioral management plan is derived from biblical principles, balancing truth and grace. It respects each student as an image bearer of God and seeks to be restorative.

Indicator 4.1.2

Academic and spiritual advocacy: Recognizing that each student benefits from a caring adult Christian role model and an academic advocate, the school has a formal program established in which each student is well-known by at least one adult who supports the student academically and spiritually.

Indicator 4.1.3

Counseling and guidance resources for students: The school provides counseling and guidance services for students and families in the areas of emotional needs, academic planning, and career decision-making.

Standard 4.2

Practicing Christian Community: Teachers and students demonstrate Christian community, living out their faith together through worship and service in the classroom and beyond.

Indicator 4.2.1

Classroom community is structured on biblical ideals: All members of the classroom community are respected and each member has the opportunity to contribute. Strengths are used for the benefit of the community; differences are celebrated, never exploited. Gifts and fruits of the Spirit are recognized and encouraged.

Indicator 4.2.2

Climate/culture: The desire to have a relationship with God permeates every aspect of the school. Both the people and environment exhibit Christ-like characteristics. The climate and culture reflect the mission, vision, and shared beliefs of the school community.

Indicator 4.2.3

Worship experiences: The school community lives out its faith together through worship and service. Students and teachers have corporate and small group opportunities for worship—wondering at God's majesty, seeking His face, and growing in discipleship.

Indicator 4.2.4

Service opportunities: Students understand the needs of the larger community and world and are motivated by Christ's example to meet those needs by creating and implementing plans.

Standard 4.3

Christ-honoring Community: The school is intentional about its operations and stakeholders view the school as a model of a Christ-honoring community.

Indicator 4.3.1

Board-administration relationship: The governing body and administration clearly understand each other's roles in maintaining and nurturing a great school that honors Christ's Spirit within the community and provides students with an excellent Christian education.

Indicator 4.3.2

Visionary strategic plan: As part of its strategic plan creation (see 1.2.7), the governing body provides a vision and visionary leadership for the school.

Indicator 4.3.3

Facilities: The school can effectively implement its mission, curriculum, and academic program using the current physical facilities. The facilities are considered an asset to both the internal and external community.

Standard 4.4

Interaction with Community: The school's interactions and relationships with its stakeholders and community are intentional and well implemented.

Indicator 4.4.1

Multiple methods of communication with families: The school believes that effective Christian education depends on vibrant partnerships with parents and families. To enhance these partnerships the school relies on a variety of interactive, on-going, and meaningful communication methods and strategies.

Indicator 4.4.2

Intentional: The school has intentional, formal channels to listen to and communicate with all stakeholders. The school solicits the opinions of parents, employees, and other stakeholders.

Indicator 4.4.3

4.4.3 Volunteer involvement: A volunteer coordination program is in place. This includes appropriate procedures for recruiting, screening, orienting, and training volunteers.

Indicator 4.4.4

Broader community: The school has effective communications and relationships with the broader community: area churches, alumni, neighbors, community organizations, and others with legitimate interests in the mission of the school.