

# ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

## ACCREDITATION COMMISSION OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST SCHOOLS

("\*\*" indicates that additional notes are included in the attached Explanatory Addenda)

### Article I. *Eligibility for Membership and Affiliate Membership*

- A. Any Texas Christian preschool, elementary, middle, or high school, or system of schools is eligible to seek accreditation by ACTABS. The combination of grades offered must be contiguous and consistent with the philosophy of the school.
  1. Addendum 1.A
- B. Types of membership:
  1. *Regular Membership*- A Christian school seeking accreditation and membership must maintain one or more of the following:
    - a. Affiliation with a church which is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas
    - b. Affiliation with a church which is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention
    - c. Affiliation with a local association of churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas
    - d. Affiliation directly with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.\*\*
  2. *Affiliate Membership*- A Christian school not meeting the membership requirements of I.B.a (above) may become accredited and an affiliate member of ACTABS provided it meets all other standards. An affiliate member pays dues, may attend ACTABS meetings, has advisory privileges, but does not have voting rights.
- C. Any school seeking accreditation must be a member in good standing of the Texas Association of Baptist Schools.
- D. The entire school, consisting of all grades currently offered (Preschool-12), must be evaluated for accreditation initially, and all grades must have been operating successfully for at least one year prior to the site visit. If an accredited school adds grades, the new grades will remain unaccredited until a request by the school is made for a team visit and approval by a majority vote of ACTABS. The accreditation of the rest of the school will remain in effect while the new grade(s) undergoes the accreditation process.\*\*
- E. Accreditation visits may take place as early as April or May at the conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- F. School Systems: Systems of schools will be accredited as a unit, and any portion of the system that fails the accreditation process will cause the system to remain unaccredited.

The entire system, consisting of all grades at all campuses currently offered (K-12, with preschool optional) must be evaluated for accreditation initially, and all grades at each campus must have been operating successfully for at least one year prior to the site visit. If an accredited system adds additional grades or campuses, the new grade(s)/campus must be operated successfully for a minimum of one (1) year. The new grade(s)/campus will remain unaccredited until a request is made by the school for a team visit and approval by a majority vote of ACTABS. The accreditation of the rest of the system will remain in effect while the new grade(s)/campus is undergoing the accreditation process.\*\*

G. Eligibility Maintenance: To maintain eligibility for membership, an accredited school must:

1. Appoint two commissioners
2. At least two staff members from an accredited school must have completed the ACTABS training session in preparation for service as accrediting members
3. Schools with new head administrators or new facilities should be visited by previous accreditation chair or Executive Director within one year
4. Submit evidence to the visiting team chair that any deficiencies are being addressed within the stated time on the report. The chair of the visiting team will make a report on correction of deficiencies to the chair of the standard committee
5. Undergo an interim visit at the fifth year unless significant deficiencies need to be addressed then the school should have a 2-3 year visit to make sure deficiencies have been corrected
6. Undergo a full accreditation visit every ten years
7. School commissions are expected to attend the biannual TABS/ACTABS meetings
8. Consistent absence from ACTABS and TABS meetings and/or consistent violations of the standards will jeopardize accreditation of the school\*\*

## **Article II. *Philosophy***

The school must have a stated and published philosophy. The philosophy should be reviewed periodically with several groups (i.e., governing body, administration, faculty, and/or parents).

- A. The philosophy must allow for careful attention to the academic, spiritual, and physical development of students.
  1. An interview of governing body members is used to determine if this standard has been met.
  2. There must be a published statement of explicit goals emanating from and intended to implement the approved philosophy.\*\*
    - a. These goals are broad strokes that help explain the basic philosophy of the school.
  3. Every policy adopted by the governing body, as well as every administrative and educational practice, is consistent with the goals and the philosophy.
  4. The church or sponsoring body has approved the philosophy of the school.\*\*

- a. Evidence of actual support by the congregation or sponsoring body in helping the school to achieve its goal is furnished by reviewing governing body minutes.
5. The philosophy should reflect a Christian perspective of education and a Christian statement of faith.

### **Article III. *Organization and Governance***

- A. The school may be a legally constituted Texas corporation or an integral part of the sponsoring church ministry.
  1. If the school is a separate corporation, it must have a governing board and the actions of the governing board are legally binding to the school.
  2. If the school is an integral part of the legal entity of the church, its governing board or trustees are an official committee/board of the church, according to church policy, and the actions of the governing board are legally binding to the school.
- B. If the school is an integral part of the church, the relationship between the church/sponsoring body and school is harmonious.
  1. The church/sponsoring body may support the school financially, or may receive funds from the school for joint use of facilities and services provided. The church/sponsoring body is careful in limiting the amount of reimbursement to the reasonable cash outlay due to the operation of the school within the church/sponsoring body's facility, avoiding any possibility of receiving excess funds, such as rent or capital building depreciation reimbursement.
  2. In dual use of facilities, the school staff and volunteer or professional staff are cooperative.
- C. The governing body has approved and published operating policies (i.e., governing body policies, teacher manuals, student/parent handbooks, etc.). These policies guide the actions of the governing body itself as well as the administration.
- D. Each school shall provide an orientation and training program for new governing body members.\*\*
  1. One verification method is to present a copy of the governing body orientation minutes.
- E. No single member of the governing body or church has authority to evaluate, advise or supervise any school activity or school official, unless delegated to perform a specific function by a majority of the body in an official session. No single member of the governing body or church can speak definitely in the name of the school or give the appearance of directing any phase of schools operation unless so authorized by the church body.\*\*

- F. The head administrator shall be permitted to guide the school in accordance with officially established policies and procedures without external (e.g. board or parent) interference.\*\*
1. External interference refers to anyone who attempts to interfere with any officially established policies (i.e., board or constituency). A check of board policy can be used to see if this policy is in effect.

#### **Article IV. Administration**

- A. The head administrator of the school is authorized to manage and operate all programs of the school - financial, academic, spiritual, physical, co-curricular activities, discipline, admissions, facilities, personnel, etc. - under published policies adopted by the governing body or the church body.
1. If there is no established policy in an emergency situation, the head administrator is authorized to act according to his/her best judgment, but must report their actions to the board or the designated authority in a timely manner.
  2. All school administrators have appropriate training and experience.
    - a. The head administrator and/or principals must have a master's degree with appropriate training (Graduate credit course work in school administration) and experience in school administration; or the head administrator and/or principals who lack a master's degree must have a minimum of a bachelors degree, three years of teaching experience, fifteen or more semesters hours of training in school administration, and an active plan for achieving an appropriate master's degree to meet this deficiency. This deficiency plan should include a minimum of three (3) semester hours of graduate school credit in school administration to be earned annually for five (5) years.
    - b. Other personnel, such as counselors, business managers, and chaplains, must have degrees, certification and/or experience appropriate to their assignments.
- B. There are enough administrative and service personnel to manage the school adequately.
1. There is a principal or full-time administrator for each division (preschool, elementary, middle, high school) which enrolls 350 or more pupils, and in no case must the ratio of administrators to pupils be less than 1:500.
  2. Adequate guidance counseling services must be provided for middle and high schools, and the ratio of full-time counselors to pupils must not be less than 1:500. If the combined enrollment of the middle and high schools exceed 500 students, a full-time counselor is required.
  3. The school provides evidence that it meets all statutory provisions for health records and assures the health and safety of its students. A method of verification is to present a check of health records, fire safety, and all certificates provided by the local, community and state to see that they are up to date to ensure requirements are met.

4. There is a full-time librarian for a school whose enrollment in grades one through twelve is five hundred or more, and for smaller schools library service must be available. (See Article VI.A.d)\*\*
  - a. Library service includes hardcopy and electronic resources.
5. Business affairs are efficiently managed and adequate support services are available for this purpose.\*\* (See Article VII)
6. There is adequate support service to provide for the efficient upkeep of permanent records. Permanent records should be kept in a secure fireproof environment, otherwise duplicate or electronic copies of records should be maintained in a separate location as well as a plan to provide access to records should the school close.
7. Transcript services are readily available to students. They shall be designed to be easily interpreted by the receiving agency.
8. All employees and volunteers must have criminal history background checks.

**Article V.     *Facilities***

- A. All statutory building codes are met or exceeded.\*\* In the Documents notebook verification is to present city, county, state and federal building, fire and fire extinguisher certificates. Be sure to review fire drills plans and fire drill practices.
- B. The school may use the church plant or occupy a separate campus if:
  1. There are adequate classrooms available for the total number of pupils and each room is large enough to accommodate the number of students assigned.\*\*
    - a. Adequate classroom space refers to approximately 20 square feet per child per room.
  2. There is adequate office space for the school.
  3. Restrooms are adequate in number and appropriate for the ages of the children enrolled in the school.
  4. There is a library available to the school with at least fifteen volumes (print and electronic) per child enrolled in grades one through twelve. The library may be jointly used by the church and school. There must be an adequate number of reference books.
    - a. Library services include hardcopy and electronic resources.
  5. Playground space, athletic fields, and gymnasium facilities must be available as appropriate for the number and age levels of the students. All federal, state and local safety standards should be met.
  6. Schools must meet all health codes.\*\*
    - a. Health codes, food serving, sanitation (restrooms) are included in this standard.
  7. There is a teachers' lounge and workroom. Equipment necessary to communicate with parents, to serve instructional needs and to keep records is adequate.
  8. There is space adequate to maintain pupil's permanent records, and accurate pupil data is maintained permanently. \*\* A plan must be in place for records availability in case of school closure.
  9. Water fountains, dressing and shower rooms and storage spaces are adequate.\*\*

- a. Adequate refers to age-appropriate for each class.
  - 10. There is adequate parking space for teachers and students.
  - 11. Signs inform visitors of how to find the school administrative offices easily.
- C. All space occupied by students or staff is adequately cooled, heated, lighted and ventilated.
- D. Adequate safety precautions are observed. Particular care is exercised in peak traffic periods before and after school.\*\*
- 1. Document this standard by preschool and after-school visit to area where students are dropped off and picked-up.

## **Article VI. Faculty**

- A. All teachers are qualified with appropriate degrees and training.
- 1. The bachelor's degree with twenty-four (24) semester hours, or appropriate certification in the subject matter being taught, is required.
    - i. However, degreed teachers with twelve semester hours in a subject may teach if the time assigned is less than one-half the teaching load.
  - 2. Kindergarten and elementary teachers must have a bachelor's degree with twenty-four (24) semester hours of elementary courses, such as elementary reading, language arts, music, elementary science, elementary math, elementary social studies, and elementary physical education, or appropriate certification. Kindergarten endorsement is recommended.
  - 3. Pre-kindergarten teachers will be qualified if they have the bachelor's degree (and/or an appropriate preschool degree) with at least twelve semester hours in elementary education courses, or if they possess certification as a kindergarten teacher, or teacher of young children, or an associate (two-year) degree in the education of young children. Seminary trained teachers in religious education of young children are also qualified to teach pre-kindergarten.
  - 4. Teachers of credit bearing Bible and/or religion classes must hold a bachelors degree, but may waive the 24/12 hour subject matter requirement.
- B. All teachers give evidence of a Christian commitment consistent with the philosophy of the school.\*\*
- 1. Accreditation Teams will review signed contract to see if faculty approves of philosophy of school, and interview teachers to understand the way they interpret school philosophy.
- C. The school conducts an annual evaluation process for individual members of the faculty.
- D. Professional staff members are employed by contract.
- E. Records for faculty members are kept permanently and show service dates, sick leave accumulation, transcripts (showing degree(s) earned), proof of necessary certification, evaluations, and evidence of ongoing professional development.\*\*

1. Professional development includes CEU's, workshops, seminars, other professional conferences, and travel broadens the faculty members' knowledge.
- F. Teacher planning, preparation time, and class size are provided appropriate to the teaching assignment and should be conducive to maximum learning.\*\*
1. Each teacher should be provided at least one planning period per day. It is recommended that academic class size should not exceed 1:25 at the High School level; K-3 – 1:18; Grades 4-8 – 1:22. More than 4 daily different preparations are considered excessive at the secondary level.
- G. Qualified applicants are employed without regard to race, color, ethnic background, or national origin.\*\*
1. This statement should be printed and published.

## **Article VII. *Finances***

Income from tuition, fees, gifts, endowments, and fund raising activities must be adequate to support a high-quality educational program.

- A. Salaries and benefits are sufficient to attract and hold competent teachers, administrators and staff members.\*\*
1. The school must show comparable salaries and benefits with local public and private schools (when possible) in the area, teacher turnover rate or other indicators.
- B. There are adequate supplies, current textbooks, age-appropriate furniture and technology equipment available for the operation of the educational program.
- C. A balanced annual budget is proposed by the administration, adopted by the governing body or church body and managed by the administration. Financial statements are prepared at least quarterly and distributed according to policy.
- D. An annual review of financial transactions is conducted by someone outside the school with an appropriate expertise in financial matters. A signed financial report must be on file in the board's minutes. If the accounting procedures are operated jointly in the church office, school funds are administered separately from church funds. Funds collected by the school may not be appropriated by the church outside of regular reimbursements.\*\*
1. Questions to ask to determine if financial accounting procedures are in order include:
    - a. Is there a listing of checks and currency deposits record?
    - b. Are there adequate physical controls from receipt to deposit?
    - c. Are receipts kept?
    - d. Are all funds (except petty cash) paid by check?
    - e. Are good business procedures followed (i.e. payment of bills on time, planning for major expenditures, appropriate signatures on legal documents, approved by board, regular reconciliation of bank account,

- monthly statements of tuition, past due accounts followed-up on, yearly budget, budget comparison from previous years, filing of federal forms).
- f. Is there a summary of the school's indebtedness listing to whom the debt is owed?
- E. There is a willingness by the church/sponsoring body to underwrite any school expenses which the school is unable to pay. This standard does not apply to independent schools.
- F. No abrupt terminations of grade offerings should occur. Due consideration for the educational welfare of students will cause a church to phase out its school (if so desired), in a manner that is in the best interest of the students currently enrolled.
- G. Funds are available for staff development, including travel expense funds for administrators and teachers.\*\*
1. The financial statement should reflect money set aside for staff development, including travel expense funds for administrators and teachers.
- H. There are enough support staff employees to serve the operation of the school adequately and enough teachers that classes do not become unreasonably large.\*\* (See VI.F)

#### **Article VIII. *Students***

- A. The school admits qualified students without regard to race, color, ethnic background, or national origin.\*\*
  1. Provide documentation identifying these four items in the make-up of the school population.
- B. Students are screened and admitted only when the school's program can be predicted to serve the needs of each.\*\*
- C. Students are evaluated annually. Standardized test scores in group form are available to parents, the governing body and the sponsoring body.
- D. Any currently or previously enrolled student will have his/her record kept permanently on file by the school.\*\* (See IV.B.f)
- E. The school publishes documents that describe the curriculum, its organization, how students are classified, the marking system, disciplinary rules and techniques, promotion and retention policies and high school graduation requirements (if applicable).\*\*
- F. There is a mandatory attendance rule for students which meets or exceeds the state standards.\*\*

#### **Article IX. *Curriculum***



- A. The school day and year should reasonably align with the minimum requirements set by the Texas State Board of Education for accredited public schools. The State of Texas requires a 7-hour instructional day and 175 days of instruction a year, or 73,500 minutes (first bell to last bell).
  - a. It is recommended that consideration be given to the local public school calendar.
- B. Bible is a required subject for all enrolled students and is carried out in addition to the instructional time necessary for other required academic course offerings.
- C. The curricular and co-curricular activities are designed to develop each student intellectually, spiritually, socially and physically.
- D. The TEKS prescribed by the Texas State Board of Education for all courses in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade are included in the curriculum. Curricular documents may be designed in various formats. These documents must include pacing guides or scope and sequences: the grade level, content area, TEKS, learning objective(s) suggested time frame/duration, instructional strategies, resources, assessment, and biblical integration. The school offers the courses required for public schools in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, but each school with grades nine through twelve may select to offer the sequence of courses required for graduation.
- E. The school publishes and makes available printed material describing the curriculum offered and teaching methodologies.
- F. Schools that adopt self-contained curriculum developed by an outside entity must ensure these are from regionally accredited organizations. In turn, the school effectively quantifies student learning through the same measures used to validate other modes of instruction and makes appropriate adjustments to ensure comparable learning is taking place. Where such regionally accredited curriculum cannot reasonably be adopted, yet the school determines a self-contained curriculum is the best pedagogical mode of instruction, it must ensure the program is research-based, meets or exceeds all state learning objectives, and is supplemental to an overall curriculum design, taught by a qualified in-class teacher, using other instructional resources.
- G. Schools show evidence of integration of a Bible worldview in all subject area curricula.

## **Article X. *Distance Learning Programs***

Schools that offer distance learning programs must meet the following criteria:

- A. Institutional Readiness
  - a. The school must have a plan to implement distance education instruction. At a minimum, the plan should include the rationale, resources, course/program objectives, content and student assessment. The school must integrate this plan into the School Improvement Plan.
  - b. The school must demonstrate adequate qualified personnel to provide leadership,

support and instruction to sustain a quality distance education program.

- c. The delivery method must be appropriate for students and the curriculum.

#### B. Admissions Requirements and Enrollment

- a. The school must identify the admission requirements of distance education courses/programs and how it differs from, if applicable, the resident admission requirements.
- b. If an on-line admissions test is required, it must be administered in a manner which verifies the student's identity. Schools must make it clear in writing at the time of enrollment how the student's identity will be verified throughout the course and program, how the student's privacy will be protected and if the student will be assessed any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity.
- c. The school must clearly and appropriately state any requirements the students must possess or have access to in order to access this mode of delivery.
- d. The school must provide an on-line orientation program to familiarize the student with the equipment, resources used in the distance education activities and orient the student to the distance education learning process.

#### C. Curriculum Content, Instruction and Delivery

- a. The curriculum guide must show that the distance education course(s) meet TEKS learning objectives.
- b. The course/program must demonstrate sufficient and appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- c. The school must demonstrate that the clock or credit hours required and awarded are appropriate for the credits offered using a thoroughly developed rationale.
- d. Curriculum must be administered in a way that maintains security of access.
- e. The school must demonstrate that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The verification method, at the option of the institution, may include a secure login and passcode, proctored examinations and other appropriate student authentication or verification technology.

#### D. Faculty and Instructional Support

- a. The school must employ academically and experientially credentialed faculty to oversee the instruction, evaluation and grading requirements of the distance education course/program.
- b. The faculty must possess the appropriate technical skills and be adequately trained to instruct in a distance education environment.
- c. The faculty must be supported with the appropriate educational resources and technology to instruct using this method of delivery. Students must also be provided with the appropriate technical and academic support to successfully complete the program/course using this form of instruction.
- d. The school must provide evidence that there is an appropriate number of faculty for the student population involved. The school must be able to justify their

student-teacher ratio(s).

- e. The school must have a faculty development plan on file that is appropriate for each individual.

E. Resources and Equipment

- a. The school must demonstrate that it has adequate financial resources to support the form of delivery.
- b. Instructional resources, equipment, library resources and network connectivity, if applicable, must be readily available, accessible and reliable.

F. Student Evaluation and Program Assessment

- a. Requirements for successful completion of distance education courses/programs must be similar to those of residential courses/programs.
- b. Assessment of student performance and academic success should demonstrate outcomes for distance education courses/programs that are comparable to those of residential courses/programs. The assessment may include a synthesis of portfolios, group work, applied writing, pre- and post-testing, capstone courses, seminars and on-line presentations (if applicable).
- c. The institution must document that it conducts course/program evaluations, including assessment of student learning outcomes and satisfaction.

G. Publications

- a. The institution must fully disclose what form(s) of instruction it uses in its catalog and web site and, when appropriate, in its advertising and promotional material.

**Explanatory Addenda**

**Article IV. Administration**

- B. 6. Permanent records should be kept in a secure fireproof environment, otherwise duplicate or electronic copies of records should be maintained in a separate location.

**Article IX. Curriculum**

- A. The State of Texas requires a 7-hour instructional day and 175 days of instruction a year, or 73,500 minutes (first bell to last bell).

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