

Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association



**Member of the National Federation of Nonpublic
School State Accrediting Association**

ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Vision Statement	3
Purpose and Guiding Principles	3
Association History and Recognition	3
Member Institutions	4
Sponsoring Agencies	5
Procedures and Responsibilities	5
Non – Compliance	5
Standards/Indicators	5
Procedures	6
Admission	6
Annual Accreditation	6
Accreditation Status	7
Appeals Process	7
Dues	8
Review by Board of Directors	8
Publication of Member Schools	8

Vision Statement

The Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA) is a recognized professional organization that accredits Missouri's non-public schools and leads them to adopt the best education practices as these schools strive to become the schools of choice.

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The accreditation of a school has become increasingly important. Society continues to demand evidence of a school's effectiveness. Accreditation is both a measure of a school's effectiveness and a process of ongoing school improvement. In addition, in the state of Missouri, teaching in a state recognized accredited school is required to maintain state teacher certification. Many foundations also reserve funding for schools that are accredited.

Underlying all the reasons to seek accreditation is a basic desire on the part of a school to provide the best educational program for the students it serves. The accreditation process motivates a school to meet the standards of an excellent educational program. After the standards are met, an accredited school will regularly conduct school self-evaluations, develop action plans, and continue to improve in terms of how it meets the needs of the educational community.

The guiding principles of the Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA or the Association) indicate a strong commitment to the growth and improvement of member schools. The Association believes that:

- a school is judged, as far as possible, in terms of its own mission and philosophy. Although individual differences exist among schools, accreditation is based on a school's ability to demonstrate adherence to certain indicators or conditions that provide the potential for quality education.
- indicators are stimulating and conducive to educational growth, are guides for continuous self-evaluation, and provide the incentive to strive toward stated goals for improvement.
- the standards and indicators listed in this handbook apply to all schools that are seeking accreditation. However, the sponsoring agency may assign additional standards and/or indicators for its schools.

Association History and Recognition

The organization began with a desire to provide a recognized accreditation agency for Catholic and Lutheran schools in Missouri. Representatives from these schools joined representatives of other states to form the National Federation of Nonpublic School State Accrediting Association. The national organization was incorporated in the state of Minnesota in November, 1984. The Missouri Chapter was incorporated in the State of Missouri as a not-for-profit organization under Section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code on January 18, 1985. In 1999, the Islamic schools

in the state joined the Association. In 2002, the Board shortened the name of the organization to the Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association. Beginning in 2011 independent schools continued the expansion of the organization.

The national organization gives state chapters both the responsibility and the flexibility to establish their own charters, by-laws, and admission requirements, as well as standards and indicators for accreditation. The Missouri Chapter meets the criteria established by the National Association and works closely with the sponsoring agencies of schools which seek accreditation. A sponsoring agency is an educational organization which represents a group of at least three nonpublic schools.

The National Federation of Nonpublic School State Accrediting Associations is recognized by the United States Department of Education. (Confirmation specified 1/12/88 in written communication between Ramon Ruiz, Deputy Director of the Division of Educational Support, and Charles O'Malley, Executive Assistant for Private Education, United States Department of Education.) The Missouri State Board of Education, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Missouri State High School Activities Association recognize the Missouri Chapter of the National Federation. For teacher certification, the state accepts the classroom experience that is earned in nonpublic schools accredited by the MNSAA. Like other recognized accrediting agencies, the Missouri Chapter gives assurance that its member schools have met certain standards that are essential for quality education.

Member Institutions

The Association accredits nonpublic early childhood centers, elementary schools, middle schools, secondary schools, and special education schools in the state of Missouri.

Missouri Nonpublic School Accrediting Association recognizes different structural patterns in the nonpublic schools it accredits and that the distinction between a school, a consolidated school, a school system and partnership school is primarily defined by the school or the system itself. The MNSAA Board of Directors, based on recommendation and information provided by sponsoring agencies to the MNSAA Board, is the sole authority for determining the accreditation status of any type of unified school.

A school which is owned and operated by one entity or in partnership with the sponsoring agency may be in several buildings or on one or more campuses. Schools with multiple sites will be viewed as one school with one annual report, one fee, and one site visit directed by the sponsoring agency or agent directed by MNSAA. A deficient area in one building will impact the overall rating of the school. MNSAA will grant accreditation or accreditation with qualifications to the institution as one school.

A school system within a sponsoring agency is accredited as a series of separate schools, each submitting appropriate materials for accreditation directed by the sponsoring agency or agent directed by MNSAA. MNSAA will grant accreditation or accreditation with qualifications for the individual schools within the system, not for the system itself.

A **consolidated school** is defined as two or more schools previously under separate jurisdictions combining under one jurisdiction at one or more locations. The school will submit appropriate materials for accreditation directed by the sponsoring agency or agent directed by MNSAA. MNSAA will grant accreditation or accreditation with qualifications to the institution as one school.

When a unified school is opened under one of the models listed above, the school will complete the School Improvement Process within three years. During this three year period, annual reporting procedures will be followed under direction of the sponsoring agency.

Sponsoring Agencies

A sponsoring agency is the administrative entity responsible for an affiliation of at least three member schools. This affiliation is represented on the board of directors by one permanent member and additional members as determined by the by-laws.

Procedures and Responsibilities

A representative of the sponsoring agency:

- Attends and participates in all Board of Director meetings.
- Appoints appropriate representation to the Board of Directors.
- Communicates board policy and procedure to member schools.
- Ensures that its member schools are in compliance with standards and indicators and report to the Board of Directors.

Non-compliance

Sponsoring agencies that fail to fulfill their responsibilities are subjected to a review by the Board of Directors. Sanctions may include loss of sponsoring agency status. If a sponsoring agency loses its status, its affiliated schools may seek accreditation as an independent school.

Standards/Indicators

Member schools must be committed to the ongoing pursuit of standards which provide the framework for continuing self-evaluation and improvement. An accredited school must meet standards based on its adherence to all membership indicators. Standards/Indicators are available on the MNSAA website (www.moqualityschools.org).

The indicators of membership are the requirements for schools seeking accreditation. When a school makes application, it must address these indicators. To remain accredited, a school must annually report compliance with these indicators.

Procedures

Admission

Requirements for Schools Affiliated with a Sponsoring Agency

As a prerequisite to membership, a school must:

- conduct a self-evaluation.
- host a site visit.
- formulate a plan for improvement under the direction of its sponsoring agency.
- address the Indicators for Membership for each standard to the satisfaction of the Association.

Process

Schools that are affiliated with a sponsoring agency formally request admission through the sponsoring agency.

The sponsoring agency sends necessary information and materials to the school requesting membership.

The prospective member school declares its intent of becoming a member by submitting a completed Annual Report Form to the sponsoring agency.

Requirements for Non-affiliated Schools

Schools not affiliated with a sponsoring agency adhere to the same requirements as affiliated schools. These schools work directly with the executive director of the Association.

The executive director of the Association provides non-affiliated schools with resources to attain the approved evaluation tools and processes. Non-affiliated schools seeking membership submit a letter of formal request to the Association.

Annual Accreditation

Process

Schools are re-accredited on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of accredited schools to file an Annual Report Form. These reports along with the annual dues are submitted to the school's sponsoring agency or to the Executive Director for a non-affiliated school. The Board of Directors reviews all reports and recommends a specific accreditation status for each school at the annual meeting. Accreditation is granted for the upcoming school year.

Deviation from Indicators

Individual schools may not deviate from the membership indicators. Deviations are termed "cited violations." Such citing of violations demonstrates non-compliance with the indicator(s) and represents a deficiency in the school program.

Ongoing School Improvement Process

Member schools are required to conduct a school improvement process at an interval designated by its sponsoring agency or the Association.

Accreditation Status

The extent to which deficiencies affect the quality of the overall program determines the Status of Accreditation. A school can be granted the status of:

- **Accredited:** A school is granted "accredited" status when it meets all membership indicators. After a school is initially accredited, it re-applies for accreditation annually.
- **Accredited with Violation:** An accredited school does not satisfactorily meet all of the membership indicators but has a plan in place to address deficiencies.
- **Accredited with First Warning:** An accredited school does not satisfactorily meet all of the membership indicators and has not made sufficient progress towards addressing the previous year's violations or does not satisfactorily meet the expectations of the sponsoring agency.
- **Accredited with Second Warning:** A school has received a first warning and yet consistently fails to make substantial progress toward cited violations or continues to consistently violate the expectations of the sponsoring agency.
- **Loss of Accreditation:** A school fails to meet the cited membership indicators or improvement standards or refuses to do so. To apply for re-admission to the Association after losing accreditation a school follows the admission process outlined in this manual.
- **Voluntary Withdrawal:** A school voluntarily requests to withdraw or the school has closed. Failure to submit the Annual Report Form is interpreted as a request to withdraw from accreditation. To apply for re-admission in the Association after voluntarily withdrawing, a school follows the admission process outlined in this manual.

Appeals Process

A school losing accreditation status may choose to initiate an appeals process through a formal letter to a representative of the Association. This letter specifies the reasons for the appeal and agrees to assume expenses for the appeal process. If the letter presents substantial documented information not previously available to the evaluation committee, the president may grant accreditation status. If not demonstrated, the president appoints an appeals committee of three (3) association members not directly associated with the school involved. The decision of this committee is final in regard to the accreditation status of the school.

Dues

Member schools pay the dues established by the Board of Directors by the annual meeting. At the discretion of the board a late fee may be assessed.

Review by Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Association meets annually to review such issues as eligibility for the status of accreditation and changes in criteria. They may require additional reports as needed.

Publication of Member Schools

The Association annually maintains a roster of accredited schools. This listing is available on the MNSAA website (www.moqualityschools.com), the National Federation, and other appropriate agencies.