

“Is your school accredited?”

Every Christian School in New York has been asked that question. It usually involves a misunderstanding of the term “accreditation.”

The State of New York does not accredit ANY school. There are private organizations that do, but the State Education Department does not do so, nor does it give guidelines for accreditation.

Instead, non-public schools have the choice of either being deemed “substantially equivalent” by their local public school board, or being “Registered” by the State Education Department. Since “Registration” binds the non-public school to the State University of New York system with all its rules and regulations, our schools choose to be “*substantially equivalent.*”

This alternative has advantages; for example, the liberty to teach our children as we see fit. Schools teach the basics (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and the Bible (religion). They meet and exceed all state requirements and are legally recognized by the State.

There are some disadvantages too –usually caused by misunderstanding. College administrators sometimes question the validity of diplomas, for example. Although this is usually settled with a letter and explanation, it is annoying.

Thus the need for our own “accreditation” program. Our parent organization, the American Association of Christian Schools, has a well-developed program for accreditation, but it is designed for larger schools, is complex, and expensive. Since most NYACS schools are small, the NYACS Board of Directors voted to develop

our own accreditation program. A school choosing to be accredited by NYACS could use our program as a step toward AACCS accreditation.

Definition of Accreditation

“Applied to the Christian school movement, accreditation is the process by which a Christian school assesses its educational activities, in whole or part, and seeks an independent judgment to confirm that it has substantially achieved its objectives while also demonstrating an exemplary level of quality as defined by professionally-trained Christian educators...

“The accreditation process clearly has at least two purposes. One is to facilitate the Association’s task of holding individual schools accountable to the standards held in common with Christian Schools of proven excellence and to the school’s own unique goals and objectives. The second, and the more important, is to assist a member school in its efforts at self-understanding, analysis, and improvement.”

-AACCS Accreditation Manual

Demands of Accreditation

A school seeking accreditation by the New York Association of Christian Schools must do a self-study and provide evidence that it is a quality Christian School. The Board of Directors believe this includes the following:

- **Fundamentals – Is the school sound?**
 1. Confession of Faith & Philosophy of Christian Education
 2. Curriculum that includes:
 - a. Appropriate scope and sequence

- b. Assessments – regular tests and report cards
- c. Achievement testing (such as SAT)
- d. Code of Conduct – student/teacher/parent manual(s)
- e. Communication – regular newsletters, meetings with parents, etc.
- f. Calendar – showing approximately 180 days of instruction per school year.
- g. Credits – What are the requirements for graduation?

- **Finances – Is the school solvent? -**

The school must have a realistic budget (income versus expenses), and keep good records. This includes adequate storage of student report cards, health records, etc. The school should have a “Letter of Substantial Equivalency” and a B.E.D.S. number.

- **Faculty – Is the school sufficient? (Can the teachers do the job?)**

- a. Credentials – Are the faculty members adequately trained and capable to teach what they are asked to teach.
- b. Competent – Are teachers regularly observed and evaluated?
- c. Cultivation – staff development, staff meetings, conferences, continuing education, etc.

- **Facilities – Is the school safe?**

This includes the Occupancy Permit given by the Building Department, Fire Safety Inspections, and regular fire drills (10 are recommended each year).

- **Families –Who is being served?**

- a. Students – Do they give evidence of Christian commitment and growth? What happens to the graduates?

- Do they go on to Christian colleges?

- Do they remain active members of Bible-believing churches?

- Do they send their own children to a Christian School?

- b. Parents – Are the parents of the students ‘satisfied customers’?

- c. Church Members – Do they see the need and are they committed to having a Christian School as a ministry of the Church? Do they support the school financially? Do they participate in school activities and programs?

- **Future – What are the future goals and vision?**

- Proverbs 29:18A says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

- It is important to look forward, set reasonable goals, and plan steps for reaching those goals. Failure to do so is the reason many Christian Schools close. One of these goals should be an annual review of the materials for accreditation.

Design of Accreditation

There are four steps in the NYACS Accreditation Program:

Step #1 – Application -Schools seeking accreditation from the New York Association of Christian Schools need to fill out an application form, conduct a self-study covering the items listed in the previous section, and pay an application fee of \$250.

Step # 2 Appraisal

Representatives from the NYACS Board will review the application and report on the self- study.

If accepted, an onsite visit will be made by at least two Board members. This visit will include visiting the pastor and administrator. It will also include walking through the facilities, visiting class rooms in session, and interviewing some students, teachers and parents.

Step # 3 Approval

The Accreditation Team will issue a brief report for the entire Board of Directors. If the school has some deficiencies, these will be addressed before the school is approved as “accredited by the New York Association of Christian Schools.” Once approved, a certificate will be issued.

Step # 4 Audit – This should be an ongoing process, and will be subject to review every 5 years.

NOTE: NYACS Accreditation is voluntary, and in no way implies that schools choosing not to participate in this process are inferior or illegal.

Accreditation Program

“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;” -- Philippians 1:10



New York Association of Christian Schools

P.O. Box 16319
Rochester, NY 14616
(585) 748-6296
www.nyacs.com