

The Importance of Accreditation for PK-12 Adventist Schools

The facilitator of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) was poised to begin the meeting. It was year five of the NAD Six-year Accreditation Cycle for the school and one year away from the arrival of the Visiting Team to validate the school's Self-study Report. The school had been preparing for the visit for the past four years as part of the Continuous School Improvement (CSI) Process.

Today's agenda focused on reviewing the nine Standards for Accreditation of Seventh-day Adventist Schools and related data. Each staff member, along with parents and board members, had been appointed to serve on a team to assess the school in the nine standards. Data was critical to the work!

This process differed significantly from the past, with a shift from an "event" or compliance mindset to a commitment to "continuous school improvement." CSI Planning now occurs in response to data analysis and the identified needs of the school program, with the goal of creating a shared vision which is implemented in a CSI Plan. Most importantly, the mission of Adventist education is the lens through which program change is managed and evaluated.

In addition to a commitment to Continuous School Improvement, achieving excellence requires quality assurance with energies and resources directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning within a standards-based framework. Standards are ideals for quality programs that are specific, attainable, and measurable. They describe an effective program that leads to Continuous School Improvement and results in improved student learning.

The Standards for Accreditation of Seventh-day Adventist Schools is a dynamic, research-based tool designed to assist schools in the process of self-assessment that is context-specific, evidence-informed, and outcomes-focused. The Self-study provides schools with a robust structure for reflecting upon programs and practices, raising quality, achieving excellence, and delivering better outcomes for learners and their families.

Anticipation was high as the PLC embarked on final preparation for the completion of the Self-study Report. Each member of the team had invested time and resources to reach this stage. As a team, they had taken ownership of their school's Journey to Excellence!

Standards for Accreditation of Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Philosophy and Mission—The philosophy, mission, and vision statements are learner-centered and give direction to the school's program, and are developed and approved cooperatively by the administration, staff, and school board and reflect the Seventh-day Adventist worldview, core values, and educational philosophy.

Curriculum—The curriculum is the core of the educational program providing for the spiritual, mental, physical, social and emotional development of learners and preparing them for this world and for eternity.

Instruction—The instructional program is aligned with curriculum design and assessment practices and provides for a variety of learning experiences, consistent with the school's philosophy, goals, and standards and actively engages students in learning.

Assessment—Assessment data informs changes in curriculum and instruction to support learning.

Sustainable Leadership—Administration and school board ensure the effective and successful operation of the school to promote learner success and well-being.

School Environment—The school environment is designed and maintained to promote student learning and to support the school's mission and goals.

Professional Learning—Administration and faculty collaborate to develop and implement professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of each learner and enhance the ongoing growth and development of school personnel.

Communication and Collaboration—Communication and collaboration among the school, constituency, and community are essential to providing an effective educational program for learners.

School Improvement—The accreditation process assists a school in appraising the total program to determine the level to which the purpose and function outlined in its statement of philosophy and goals for student learning are accomplished as well as in providing the basis for action plans to address areas needing improvement.

