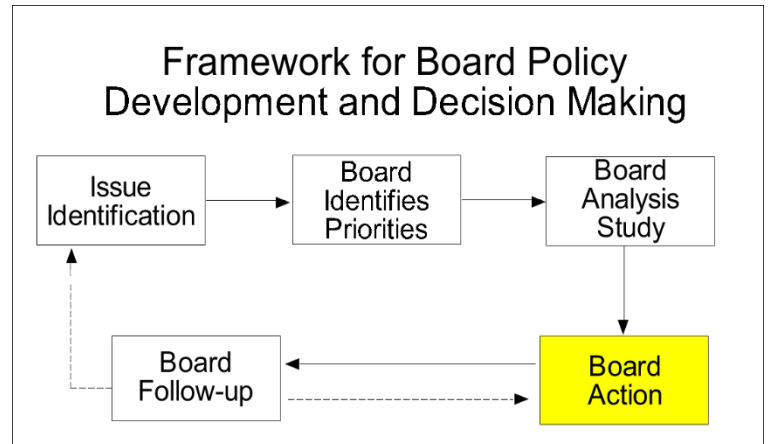


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

January 11, 2024



Agenda Item: Middle States Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools Independent Accrediting Agency Application Approval

State Board Priority: Eliminating Achievement and Opportunity Gaps

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code section 256.11 subsection 16 grants authority to the State Board to maintain a list of approved independent accrediting agencies

Presenter(s): Tina Wahlert, Bureau Chief
Bureau of School Improvement

Eric Heitz, Administrative Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Dennis McClain, Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the Middle States Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools application as a “reliable authority concerning the quality of education” and grant the agencies authority to accredit nonpublic schools in the state of Iowa.

Background:

A nonpublic school may be accredited by an independent accrediting agency that appears on a list maintained by the State Board of Education. The list shall include accrediting agencies that, as of January 1, 2013, accredited a nonpublic school in this state that was concurrently accredited under this section; and any agency that has a formalized partnership agreement with another agency on the list and has member schools in this state as of January 1, 2013. [Five agencies met this standard at the enactment of these rules: Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), Christian Schools International (CSI), Cognia (formerly AdvancEd), The National Lutheran Schools Association (NLSA), and The Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI). The American Montessori Society was approved by the State Board at the May 2014 meeting.]



January 11, 2024

Middle States Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools

Background

Iowa Code section 256.11 subsection 16 grants authority to the State Board to maintain a list of approved independent accrediting agencies. Agencies on this list may accredit nonpublic schools.

The list shall include accrediting agencies that, as of January 1, 2013, accredited a nonpublic school in this state that was concurrently accredited under this section; and any agency that has a formalized partnership agreement with another agency on the list and has member schools in this state as of January 1, 2013. Five agencies met this standard at the enactment of these rules:

1. Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)
2. Christian Schools International (CSI)
3. Cognia (formerly AdvancEd)
4. The National Lutheran Schools Association (NLSA)
5. The Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI)

The American Montessori Society was approved by the state board at the May 2014 meeting.

The deadline to apply to become an approved independent accrediting agency to be placed on the state approved list was December 15, 2023. The applicant was notified via email the application was received before the deadline and was under review.

Application Review Process

The application review process included three readers. Each read all applications and utilized the scoring matrix aligned to the application. After individual readers reviewed and scored each application independently, readers discussed the application and came to a consensus on the application's scores. The scoring matrix below indicates the scores assigned to the Middle States Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Section	Rationale	Score
Section A: Organization Information	The application provided extensive information related to organizational structure and supports. This included clearly defined processes, procedures, standards and oversight (specifically, a Plan for Growth and Improvement).	29 /32
Section B. Accreditation Standards	The application indicated rigorous academic standards in addition to monitoring of student achievement. The application described the process for corrective action plans for a school, if needed. The evidence provided lacked information on how the applicant helps schools with contract management.	45 /50
Section C. Accreditation Process	The application indicated a solid process is in place to help schools work toward accreditation. The process includes an annual report driven by data,	10 /10

	the services the school has received, and progress the school is making toward their goals/objectives.	
Section D. Organization Structure, Citations	The application provided evidence of detailed fiscal, data and contract management practices and procedures for the accrediting agency.	8 /8
Section E. Additional Information (no points)	The agency has been accrediting schools since 1887 and currently accredits 2,924 schools in 45 states. The applicant provided a thorough fiscal audit report.	NA
Final Applicant Score and Final Rationale (if appropriate)	Recommended	92/100

Score Range	Recommendation
75-100 (75%+)	Recommended
60-74 (60-74%)	Recommended subject to conditions or assurances
<60 (<59%)	Not Recommended

Recommendation

Middle States Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools received a consensus score of 92 across the required components in the application. It is recommended that the State Board approve the Middle State Association-Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools to accredit Iowa nonpublic schools as stated in the Iowa Code section 256.11 subsection 16.

Appendices

1. [Middle State Association Application](#)