



Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation **ACCREDITATION NEWS**

Mission:

The Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation annually accredits schools that meet rigorous standards of excellence and demonstrate continuous school improvement.

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Thank You!

WRISA commends school leadership, teachers, and support staff for adjusting to the ever-changing landscape of learning during these challenging times. Thank you for all the time and work you have done and are doing supporting students, families, and one another and keeping each other safe. Thank you!

WRISA Responds to COVID-19

After schools were closed in spring, the WRISA Board of Directors took action to assure schools they would not lose their accreditation if they were not able to meet the required hours of instruction for the 2019-20 school year. Schools were directed to follow all guidelines from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the State and local health departments.

The Board went on to develop Standard Quality Indicator 6.15 to specifically address virtual learning.

In addition, the Board approved a modified Site Visit format for schools hosting Site Visits during the 2020-21 school year. In this modified protocol, schools upload their documentation to cloud-based storage where the Visiting Team reviews it. Most interviews are conducted by phone. Visits use both ZOOM or Google Meet for team meetings and Google Drive or drop box for document sharing, report writing, and collaboration. The actual onsite visit has been shortened and, in some instances, postponed to a later date when a small team will conduct a visit that focuses on school climate and culture (Standard 3); physical facilities (Standard 5); student classroom engagement (Standard 6); and health, safety, and crisis measures (Standard 8).

The Board postponed or granted extensions to several others. Most schools are moving forward with their visits as scheduled.

Board Accredits 259 School

At the June and November meetings, the Board of Directors accredited **259** schools. To view the complete list of schools, visit the WRISA website: www.wrisa.net after January 1, 2021 and click on the "WRISA Schools" link.

Schools Accredited for a Subsequent Cycle

Congratulations to these previously accredited schools who continue to meet the WRISA Standards with Quality Indicators and demonstrate their commitment to excellence. These schools engaged in a Self Study process and underwent an intense review by an impartial team of educational professionals. All engage in strategic planning. *(Alphabetized by location)*

Altoona	St. Mary's Elementary School	Milwaukee	St. Adalbert School
Eau Claire	Immaculate Conception Elementary	Milwaukee	St. Charles Borromeo School
Eau Claire	Regis High School	Milwaukee	St. Sebastian School
Eau Claire	Regis Middle School	New Richmond	St. Mary School
Eau Claire	St. James Elementary School	Oshkosh	Lourdes Academy
Eden	Shepherd of the Hills School	Oshkosh	Lourdes Academy Elementary School
Fond du Lac	Faith Lutheran School	Oshkosh	Lourdes Academy High School
Hales Corners	St. Mary Parish School	Oshkosh	Lourdes Academy Middle School
Jefferson	St. John the Baptist School	Potosi	Sts. Andrew-Thomas School
Luxemburg	St. Mary School	Reedsburg	Sacred Heart School
Madison	Edgewood Campus School Inc	Watertown	Watertown Catholic School
Mayville	St. Mary School	Whitefish Bay	St. Monica School

Schools Accepted into Candidacy

The following schools have successfully met the WRISA pre-accreditation criteria, and have been accepted as Candidates. Congratulations! *(Alphabetized by location)*

Casco	Holy Trinity School	Oconto Falls	St. Anthony Catholic School
Lodi	Blessed Trinity Catholic School	Prairie du Chien	Prairie Catholic School
Madison	Madinah Academy of Madison	Thorp	Thorp Catholic School
		Tomah	Queen of the Apostles School

School Receiving Initial Accreditation

The following schools successfully completed the rigorous Self Study and Site Visit processes. Congratulations to: **St. Mary School, Colby; St. Nicholas School, Freedom; St. Augustine Preparatory Academy, Milwaukee; and, St. Anthony School, Oconto Falls.**

WRISA welcomes three new systems of schools:

- ***McDonell Area Catholic Schools (MACS)** located in Chippewa Falls consist of Holy Ghost Elementary School, McDonell Central Catholic High School. Notre Dame Middle School, St. Charles Primary School.
- ***Newman Catholic Schools (NCS)** located in Wausau and Rothschild include; Newman Catholic Middle/High School, St. Anne Catholic School, St. Mark School, St. Michael School.
- ***Roncalli Catholic High School** in Manitowoc partnered with St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School to form Roncalli Catholic Schools.

The WRISA Board determined the schools to be in compliance with the WRISA Standards with Quality Indicators. The schools developed a Long Range Plan for ongoing growth and development of their educational programs. Schools will undergo a new WRISA Self Study and host a Visiting Team within three years.

**Denotes schools previously accredited by another accrediting association and now accredited by WRISA.*

Revisions to Standards

At recent meetings, the WRISA Board of Directors reviewed the WRISA with Quality Indicators and made the following changes. These changes will be posted during the 2020-21 school year. Updates will also be made to the Standards' Checklists in the 2021-22 Annual Report. Changes are in 'red'.

STANDARD 2: Communications and Community Relations:

Principle/Standard: Members of the school community have developed, implemented, and communicated an **effective plan to interact with the broader local community**: (1) to strengthen the school and **broader local** community **relationship**, (2) to facilitate support for the school, and (3) to provide opportunities for parent education and participation in the activities of the school that encourage cooperation and collaboration among home, school, religious, and civic communities.

STANDARD 3: The Environment for Teaching and Learning

- 3.07 Conflict Resolution: Administrator of the school communicates **and implements an established and written protocol consistent** with the school's mission for resolving disagreements, conflicts and grievances within the school community.
- 3.08 Safe and Secure Environments: Administrator of the school ensures that policies and procedures for addressing emergency/crisis situations are written, published and communicated, and regularly conducts drills and reviews policies/procedures with the school **community in compliance with Wisconsin state statutes (as they apply to private schools)**.

STANDARD 4: Leadership and Governance

- 4.01 ****Governance**: The school community has a governing/consultative body working cooperatively with the administrator/principal in order to provide advice/ opinion/support for the vision and management of the mission, and core values of the school. **The governing body involves parents in the process by establishing a parent advisory committee or through other means to receive input regarding the operations of the school.**
- 4.03 Governance as its Primary Responsibility: Members of the governing/consultative body are responsible for development **and oversight of an annual budget, a three-five year Strategic Plan**, and the formulation **and review** of policies **which are consistent with the vision** and give direction and purpose to the mission of the school community. Once the policies are enacted by the appropriate authority, the administrator and/or administrative team oversees the implementation of the policies.
- 4.04 **** Incorporation**: The school is incorporated **as a 501(c)(3)** or is a part of a legal corporation **and meets requirements to be recognized as a private school by the State of Wisconsin.**
- 4.07 **Strategic and Long Range Planning Processes**: **Governing/consultative body** with the Administrator/Principal provides for a **Strategic Planning and Long Range Planning** process that includes participation of faculty, staff, parents, and representatives from other stakeholder groups such as, but not limited to, students.

Additions to Standard 4:

- 4.14 **The governing/consultative body develops a written succession plan for all aspects of school leadership (for example: the founder(s), president, executive director, principal, and board members as applicable) that ensures stability and sustainability for the school.**
(Onsite) **Written Succession Plan**
- 4.15 **The governing/consultative body implements a process for reviewing/revising the school's policies regularly.**
- 4.16 **Governing/consultative body regularly and systematically evaluates its own effectiveness in performing its duties.**

GLOSSARY ADDITIONS:

- (1) **Long Range Plan**: A plan focused on improving existing systems. The recommendations for improvement in long range planning are often external to the organization. For schools accredited by WRISA, the areas for improvement identified in the school's Self Study, recommendations made by the Visiting Team, and other areas identified by school leadership are the basis for the Long Range Plan.
- (2) **Strategic Plan**: A plan focused on goals and actions that will move the school closer to making its vision a reality. The school controls the strategic planning process and determines its own

goals and develops the actions to achieve the goals. The Strategic Plan should take into consideration the school's capacity in terms of time, energy, and resources and look at all areas of its program including services, operation, and resources.

STANDARD 5: Resources

- 5.05 Qualification/Major/Instructional Staff (Secondary Level) Teachers meet the requirements in 5.04, In addition, when teaching the same subject area for a major portion of the day, teachers should have a college major (at least 24 semester hours in that subject area). (Note: Professional personnel that meet the qualifications for certification or licensing by the state in which employed are considered in compliance with this quality indicator/benchmark.) (4) (2)
- 5.06 Qualification/Minor/Instructional Staff at the Secondary Level: Teachers meet the requirements in 5.04. In addition, when teaching the same subject area for less than a major portion of the day, teachers should have a minor (at least 12 semester hours in their assigned field). (4) (2)
- 5.09 Onsite documentation Amended:
(Onsite) Added (Teacher aides in parental choice schools must have a minimum of a high school diploma, GED, HSED, or an equivalent credential granted by the DPI or another state; or a high school diploma from the administrator of a home-based private educational program.)
- 5.10 Substitute Teachers: There are written policies relating to the qualifications, selection, training, and assignment of substitute teachers. (In parental choice schools, substitute teachers must have a college degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.)
- 5.12 Added considerations for professional planning time. The number of periods of class teaching, number of different preparations, class size, special activities and extra assignments
- 5.13 **Criminal Background Checks: Administrator/Principal oversees and ensures criminal background checks are conducted on all individuals including volunteers, support staff and contractor service providers, who have regular and ongoing contact with students.
- 5.14 ** Non-discriminatory Hiring Practices: Administrator and governing/consultative body follow non-discriminatory practices in regard to hiring. In faith-based schools hiring practices are aligned with the religious tenets of their faith. (3)
- 5.16 Broadly amended to include additional in staff personnel files.
(Onsite) Added written references, signed contracts/agreements, signed receipt of Employee Handbook (annually), record of attendance and absences, written evaluations, professional growth plan (most recent), commendations and disciplinary notices, contract modifications signed by employer and employee
- 5.17 **Special Jurisdictional Requirements: Administrators and teachers fulfill requirements as designated by the jurisdiction with which the school is affiliated and do not conflict with the WRISA Standards with Quality Indicators.
- 5.19 Position Descriptions: Administrator provides written position descriptions for the administrative staff, faculty, and all other employees of the school.
- 5.25 **Insurance Coverage: The governing body ensures that current, comprehensive insurance coverage is provided.
- 5.30 (Onsite) Added Safety Data Sheets (SDS) or Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- 5.31 Adequacy of Physical Resources: The school site, facilities, and equipment accommodate the instructional and co-curricular programs of the school for all enrolled students.
Documentation: (Onsite) Added square footage requirements
- 5.32 ** Maintenance of Physical Resources: The school site, facilities, and equipment are maintained to provide an environment that is healthy and safe for all occupants.
Documentation: (Onsite) Added a section on handling 'Family Crisis'. Materials should include phone and intervention phone numbers /contact information for shelters, safe houses, intervention resources/contacts and summer meal program locations and information.
Fire/tornado/emergency exit drill log.
- 5.33 Improvement of Physical Resources: Plans are developed and implemented for maintaining and improving the school site, facilities, and equipment.

STANDARD 6: Learning and Teaching

The Standard/Principle was revised: The instructional staff fosters an effective learning environment which provides a guaranteed and viable curriculum. It includes the assessment of the proficiency and achievement of the learner and research-based instructional strategies based on standards for content,

disposition, and process so learners develop critical thinking, creative thinking problem solving, and performance skills.

6.04 **Lesson Planning:** Instructional staff utilizes the written curriculum to plan lessons which include assessment and instructional strategies.

6.06 **Research Based Instructional Strategies:** Instructional staff utilizes the written curriculum to plan for a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet all students' learning needs.

6.15 **Virtual Learning:** In addition to compliance with all of the quality indicators above, the administrator, in conjunction with the instructional staff, instituting a part- or full-time virtual learning program establishes and documents policies and procedures which provide for an effective virtual learning environment and experience. Policies and procedures include, but are not limited to, teacher professional development opportunities and updates, expectations of administrators, teachers, parents, and students, as well as attendance monitoring, curriculum adaptation, differentiated instructional strategies, and appropriate formative and summative assessment practices.

(Onsite) policies and procedures include: professional development plan, protocols and practices for administrators, teachers, parents, and students, attendance monitoring, curriculum adaptations, differentiated instructional strategies, differentiated assessment practices.

STANDARD 8:

8.07 **Physical and Emotional Well-Being of Students:** Administrator, in consultation with the appropriate personnel, provides a plan to support the physical and emotional well-being of students in case of injury, illness, or crisis.

(Onsite) Added intervention resources

STANDARD 9: Strategic and Long Range Planning

NOTE: Schools going through their initial accrediting process are required to show evidence of a strategic plan, only. Upon receiving WRISA accreditation, a Long Range Plan that is in conformity with the WRISA Standards with Quality Indicators is required and must be updated annually and submitted with the Annual Report. If you are hosting a Visiting Team for the first time, skip 9.01-9.04 and respond only to 9.05-9.07.

(Onsite) written Strategic Plan

9.05 The governing/consultative body when developing the Strategic Plan takes into consideration the school's capacities in terms of time, energy, and resources when planning new initiatives, setting goals, and developing action plans.

(Onsite) meeting minutes

9.06 The governing/consultative body guarantees that the action plans address all areas of the school's programs, services, operations, and resources that are relevant to the school's mission and the strategic plan's goals, including a School Improvement Plan for Physical Resources which has, at least, a three year projection.

(Onsite) meeting minutes

9.07 The governing/consultative body monitors implementation of its Strategic Plan and revises it as needed to ensure it is producing the intended results.

(Onsite) meeting minutes

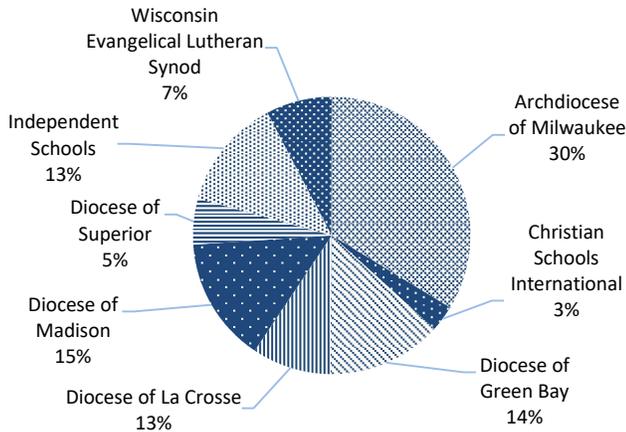
Standard A: RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Added: THIS STANDARD IS TO BE COMPLETED BY FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS ONLY. IF YOU ARE NOT A FAITH-BASED SCHOOL, STOP HERE.

End of Year Report

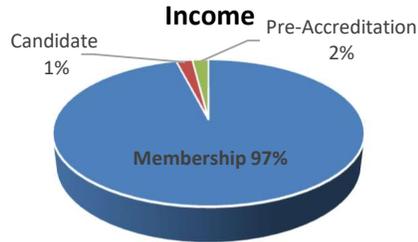
Currently, WRISA accredits 259 non-public schools serving more than 54,000 students throughout the great State of Wisconsin. This includes elementary, middle, high schools, and elementary through high school combinations. The diverse school communities include faith-based, independent, and specialty schools serving the needs unique to their student populations. The smallest accredited school has 15 students enrolled. The largest enrollment exceeds 1,500 students. In addition, there are 14 candidate schools with approximately 1,200 children enrolled.

Number of Accredited Schools by Jurisdiction

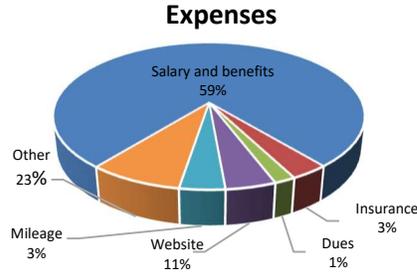


Thanks to sound fiscal management by the WRISA Board of Directors, WRISA’s budget continues to operate in the black. The projected income for the 2020-21 school year is \$74,695 which is offset by projected expenses of \$74,695. Annual membership fees account for 97% of the income. The remainder comes from pre-accreditation and candidate applications, progress report fees and support services. Investment dividends are re-invested. Income is used to cover expenses including but not limited to: maintaining the WRISA office and website; paying insurance and professional membership dues; purchasing supplies and equipment; providing workshops and in-services; reimbursing work-related expenses such as mileage; and paying wages for one part time employee, the executive director.

Projected 2020-21 Income



Projected 2020-21 Expenses



The primary responsibility of the WRISA Board of Directors is the accreditation of faith-based and independent schools in the Great State of Wisconsin. Always striving to accomplish its mission and serve school communities the Board completed following goals during the 2019-20 school year.

- Reviewed and revised, as needed, all Standards with Quality Indicators and Glossary. (full list of changes are included at end of this newsletter)
- Revised certain Standard Quality Indicators as they apply to high schools.
- Developed a response for current health emergency related to COVID-19 including a modified procedure for onsite visits.

- More than 99% of principals of WRISA schools hold a master’s degree or higher in educational leadership. Majority of principals hold state principal licenses.
- More than 99% of teachers of WRISA schools have bachelor’s degrees or higher. The majority of teachers have state teaching licenses.
- Others have Plans of Action to meet WRISA’s education requirements.

During Strategic Planning meetings, the Board developed the following goals for the 2020-21 school year:

- Continue program development for completing the Self Study, Visiting Team and Annual Reports online.
- Develop Administrator’s Handbook for Systems of Schools conducting WCSA Self Studies.
- Review responsibilities for representative for independent schools.
- Prepare transitioning strategies for executive director position.

WRISA is a member of the National Federation of Non-public School State Accrediting Associations (NFNSSAA). WRISA is recognized by: the U. S. Department of Homeland Security’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) as such, WRISA accredited schools are considered to be recognized by the U. S. Department of Education; the State of Wisconsin for pre-accrediting and accrediting schools for the Parental Choice Programs; the Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority (WHEFA); the National Honor Society (NHS) and the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). WRISA has formed a Co-operative Agreement with Middle States Association: Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA_CESS).