

Standard and Criteria



Vocational and Adult Schools

EFFECTIVE
JANUARY 2003

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION
Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement
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VISION

The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement assures the public of quality learning opportunities by holding the educational profession to ever-higher standard. NCA CASI is the professional leader in delivering quality accreditation and related services to education entities worldwide.

MISSION

Through accreditation and related services, NCA CASI continuously improves the quality of education and challenges entities to prepare each and every learner for success.

VALUES

HIGH STANDARDS – We hold ourselves and education entities to the highest professional standards.

EXTERNAL REVIEW – We validate the results of our work and those of education entities through external review.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – We challenge ourselves and education entities to be better today than we were yesterday.

ACCOUNTABILITY – We hold ourselves and education entities responsible for honoring promises, delivering results, and disclosing information to the public.

EQUITY – We commit ourselves and education entities to prepare each and every learner for success.

DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING – We require our decision and of those of education entities to be based in data.

RESEARCH-BASED CHANGE – We require ourselves and education entities to use research-based strategies to drive organizational change.

Accreditation Fees

Effective 1 July 2002

ANNUAL FEES

For elementary and middle schools	\$ 350 per year
For Special Purpose	\$ 625 per year
For Postsecondary Title IV Schools	\$1475 per year
For Early Childhood Education Program	\$ 625 per year
For all other schools	\$ 500 per school per year

AFFILIATE DISTRICT FEES

The affiliate district dues for elementary and middle schools are a base of \$2,750 for the first 10 schools and \$275 per school beyond 10.

NEW SCHOOL APPLICATION FEE

The new school application fee is \$350 per school.
For 10 to 20 new schools, the fee is \$300 per school.
For more than 20 new schools, the fee is \$250 per school.

Definition of Vocational and Adult Schools

To be eligible for NCA CASI accreditation under these criteria, a school must have every student in attendance enrolled in a vocational or adult program. The central concern of these schools is with vocational or adult education.

The vocational/adult school should issue its diploma and/or appropriate credential under its own name or on behalf of the total district. The diploma may be issued by a sponsoring secondary school, but the diploma-completion program must be fully under the direction of the separately administered vocational/adult school. Its administrative organization must be separate from that of any other school in the district although it may occupy or share the same physical facilities.

Schools not meeting the above definitions, such as comprehensive high schools with some students not enrolled in vocational or adult programs, must seek NCA CASI accreditation through another set of standard and criteria more appropriate to their programs.

As used in these criteria, *adult* signifies a person beyond the mandatory school attendance age for that particular state; *vocational* encompasses the term occupational.

The school's classification by the state educational agency will also serve as classification of level of programs for NCA CASI purposes.

THE STANDARD

Each member school shall maximize the proportion of its promoted or graduated students who are self-directed learners and are prepared to make successful transitions from school-to-school or school-to-work.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The following criteria identify conditions that must be present to meet the NCA CASI Standard. The membership criteria are required for initial and continued membership. The five major criteria are:

School Improvement Plan (SIP)
Information System (IS)
Process of Schooling (PS)
Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
Resources and Allocation (RA)

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The school is committed to developing and implementing an improvement plan that emphasizes student learning. The school community accepts that school improvement must be pursued continually and aggressively.

- SIP 1 Each school conducts a continuous improvement process that focuses on enhanced learning for all students. At all times the school is engaged actively in some phase of the school improvement process (planning, internal analysis, external review, implementation, documentation).
- SIP 2 The school has a standing committee that is responsible for initiating, planning, and coordinating the school's improvement efforts.
- SIP 3 The current school improvement initiative:
- Involves all groups in the community.
 - Begins with the development of a student profile drawn from the school's information system (see information system criteria).
 - Identifies a challenging set of goals that focuses on enhanced learning for all students.
 - Develops an improvement plan that details the changes that will be made in the process of schooling such that improvement can be documented in those goals.
 - Provides a specific assessment system designed to document increased student success on the goals identified.
- SIP 4 All schools host a peer review team on a schedule that is consistent with the selected endorsement. Such review is monitored by the respective state committee. Each school submits the appropriate documentation for peer review at the state and regional level.
- SIP 5 The school is able to document, in a variety of ways, that student performance goals are met. For example:
- A larger proportion of entering students is placed in challenging programs in which they can be successful.
 - Improvement occurs for all students in the school.
 - Students are successful with ever-more challenging instructional materials and programs.
 - A larger proportion of student learning time is spent on interdisciplinary inquiries and extended investigations.
 - Students become increasingly self-directed as learners.

INFORMATION SYSTEM

Each school is expected to have in place an assessment-driven information system that is comprehensive and current. This system is designed to address questions relative to student performance and the school's effectiveness, as well as questions which ask for a comparison of the school community's students and other students. The school continually collects student and community data to analyze the performance of its students as they enter, progress, and exit each level of schooling.

- IS 1 The school has established a data-driven information system that is used in its instructional decision-making process.
- IS 2 Information is regularly collected from community members relative to their attitudes, expectations, and assessments of the quality of the school, its program, the climate, and the success of its students.
- IS 3 Information gathered from the community and student performance information are used to design quality school programs, establish a positive learning climate, and continually evaluate and improve all school conditions.
- IS 4 The information system provides appropriate data for school personnel to analyze. For example:
- The preparation of students entering the school.
 - Changes in student performance that occur over time.
 - Progress of students in developing a more focused career interest area.
 - The extent to which promoted or graduated students are prepared to be successful at the next level of schooling, in the world of work, and in becoming self-directed learners.
- IS 5 Each school systematically analyzes its student performance data and uses the results of this analysis as the basis for the student profile and to document program effectiveness.
- IS 6 Follow-up studies of students promoted or graduated from the school are conducted to determine the degree to which students have made successful transitions to the next level and to obtain their assessment of their pattern of preparation.
- IS 7 The school continually collects and analyzes information on students who have dropped out of the educational program. The school community uses this information to develop appropriate interventions to help students re-enter the regular educational program or seek alternative forms of schooling.
- IS-v 8 A member school maintains a system of information collection that will afford evidence as to the effectiveness of the school. The following kinds of information, among others, are regarded as useful in program planning and should be given consideration as the continuous evaluation system is developed.
- Student Characteristics:* A member school determines the relevant economic, educational, mental, physical, and social characteristics of the students served by the school.
- Admission Practices:* A member school obtains data indicating the degree to which its admission practices are in accord with the admission policies of the school.
- Achievement:* An analysis is made to determine the extent to which the school's instructional objectives are being achieved.
- Student Attitudes:* Systematic inquiry is made into the perceptions held by students concerning the adequacy of their school experiences and the school program.
- Faculty Attitudes:* Systematic inquiry is made into the perceptions held by the teachers regarding those factors in the school that reduce or enhance their teaching effectiveness and that of the educational program.
- Labor Markets To Be Served:* An analysis is made of current and emergent employment needs, as the basis for those program modifications in the school that will provide the trained personnel to meet changing labor market requirements.
- Individual Program Cost Effectiveness:* An analysis is made of the per student costs of each individual program. This cost when correlated with data concerning student performance could be used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the school curriculum.
- Surveys of On-the-Job Supervisors:* If on-the-job training is provided, member schools conduct systematic surveys to evaluate the adequacy of the initial training the students have received.

- IS-v 9 Systematic assessments of changing economic and societal conditions, the characteristics of the student body, and program objectives and operations are conducted. These assessments should take into account such factors as schedules, counseling and library services, and teaching strategies and materials and should be organized in a manner to encourage modifications needed to adapt the program to its changing environment.
- IS-v 10 In cooperation with the other schools or districts within its area, the vocational/adult school conducts on a regular basis an inventory of the occupational needs and interests of its potential students.
- IS-v 11 In cooperation with the other schools or districts within its area, the vocational/adult school conducts on a regular basis an inventory and diagnosis of the students who have physical, social-emotional, mental, and academic characteristics requiring specialized educational programs and make the appropriate provisions for their most effective occupational education.
- IS-v 12 A periodic determination is made of the specific course requirements needed by the students enrolled in the school for the completion of their educational program inclusive of appropriate developmental and remedial courses directed towards "ability to benefit" students.
- IS-v 13 The administrative head is provided with the authority necessary to stimulate the continuous assessment of changing societal conditions and student characteristics and to provide leadership in accomplishing the adaptation of the program in the light of such assessment.

PROCESS OF SCHOOLING

The school is responsible for developing educational programs that reflect the characteristics of the school community and that increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of the students it serves. Through the teaching-learning program all students are expected to engage in rigorous and ever more challenging educational pursuits at all school levels. Overall the school program is designed to "be ready" to accommodate students of varying levels of development, prepare students to be productive citizens in a democratic society, and enable students to become self-directed learners.

Student Learning Goals

As a result of analyzing information on students and the community, the school establishes learning goals to give direction to the overall school program. Learning goals are designed to press all students to excellence and focus on enhancing the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of students.

- PS-v 1 The learning goals are challenging, are appropriate in terms of rigor and diversity, meet student needs, and are consistent with the stated goals of the school program.
- PS-v 2 Objectives are identified for the specific subject areas and the various school programs: the diploma-completion program, the school activity program, student personnel services. These objectives are expressed in terms of the specific behaviors, skills, and attitudes to be sought in each program area of the school. These objectives are consistent and coherent with the major purposes of the institution and with the state plan for vocational/technical education.
- PS-v 3 Where appropriate, the school's objectives should be stated in measurable behavioral and performance terms that will lend themselves to specific determination of the degree to which they are being realized in the school.

Curriculum

The curriculum reflects the needs and interests of the students and community. The curriculum is designed to increase the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of the student population and engage students in rigorous and challenging educational pursuits commensurate with their level of development. The curriculum provides a balanced school program for all students and is flexible to permit wide variation in student development.

- PS-v 5 Each school provides as a minimum those course offerings needed to facilitate either diploma-completion work, skill certificate and/or specific vocational certification requirements. Provisions are made for students needing to overcome deficiencies in communication and computational skills or needing to improve their general level of reading ability.
- PS-v 6 Each vocational school (secondary or adult) offering training or retraining programs provides no fewer than five distinct vocational offerings on site. It is the responsibility of the school to plan its curriculum patterns to serve its students and community. These vocational schools offer and teach during the regular school year at least the number of units of vocational courses required by the respective appropriate state governing body. These units must be the number approved within the minimum of five distinct vocational offerings.
- PS-v 7 The school has graduation requirements that specify the total number of units required for graduation and lists any specific courses that are required. Where state statute or regulations allow the school discretion in designating required courses, the school gives appropriate consideration to the diverse needs of the students served.
- PS-v 8 The curriculum includes learner goals that reflect the school's statement of mission and goals. The curricular and co-curricular programs are designed to address student learning goals and to enhance student development in a variety of intellectual, personal, physical, and social modes and in career development.
- PS-v 9 Quality programs are accessible for all students.
- PS-v 10 The curriculum utilizes the resources of the community.
- PS-v 11 The curriculum provides for equity of opportunity and diversity in learning activities to enable the school to meet student performance improvement goals.
- PS-v 12 The curriculum is developed, evaluated, and regularly revised by the professional staff with appropriate involvement by the school community.
- PS-v 13 Procedures that foster vertical and horizontal program articulation within the school and with affiliated schools are in place and operative.
- PS-v 14 The school is so organized as to foster experimentation and innovation designed to adapt the institution to the changing needs of its community. Through a process of continuous assessment and innovation the school seeks to improve its capacity for serving education needs efficiently and effectively. The following areas are examples of programs that might be helpful in serving the educational needs of a community.
Occupational Orientation: Programs in which the purpose, content, and methods are directed towards increasing student awareness of vocational and career concerns. (The member school should encourage the development of occupational information programs in its contributing elementary and secondary schools.)
Occupational Exploration: Programs designed to familiarize students with various occupations, the special skills required for them, and the training requisites. These programs are directed towards assisting the student to make a meaningful career choice.
Skill Development (Technical and Vocational Preparatory): Programs designed to prepare occupational secondary students for advanced or more highly skilled postsecondary vocational/technical education or training.
Skill Development (Job Proficiency Training): Programs designed to prepare students to enter employment upon completion of the courses.
- PS-v 15 Schools may offer noncredit remedial work as necessary to permit successful progress by students. All such noncredit offerings are worthwhile educational experiences in a manner appropriate to the particular requirements of students.
- The courses offered are based on an analysis of the needs and interests of the student in the community.
 - The course offerings are sufficiently diverse to assure that the community's educational needs for such courses are being met.
 - The schedule for offerings is flexible, providing coursework at those hours and in those time segments most appropriate to the requirements of adults.

- The length of the various courses need not coincide with the semester or quarter organization of the school.
- The qualifications for teachers of noncredit courses are subject to the discretion of the local governing board.
- Reasonable fees may be charged for noncredit courses.

Teaching-Learning

The teaching-learning program is designed to continually press students to higher levels of development. Students are expected to be actively engaged in challenging and rigorous educational activities essential to the successful functioning of an individual in a democratic society. The teaching-learning program focuses on the learning goals that have been established.

- PS 20 Teachers use classroom practices that make the most productive use of instructional time, e.g., collaborative learning, issue driven project work, technology, as appropriate to the subject matter.
- PS 21 The teaching-learning program is organized to allow each student to progress in a manner that is flexible and in accordance with individual development.
- PS 22 The teaching-learning program emphasizes the interrelationships among curricular areas.
- PS 23 Teachers employ a broad range of instructional techniques to take advantage of the varying intellectual strengths that exist within the student population.
- PS 24 Teachers use classroom practices and methodology consistent with current research.
- PS 25 The school uses the results of instructional assessments to press for higher levels of learning for all students.
- PS-v 26 A total pattern of successful vocational and related instruction requires many important components which member schools provide. Among these components are: (1) well defined instructional objectives stated in behavioral terms, (2) performance criteria for specific skills, (3) systematic planning by professional staff, (4) the selection and use of varied types of instructional materials and learning experiences, (5) the specific adaptation of organizational and instructional procedures to the needs of students, (6) the use of varied evaluation instruments and procedures, (7) good instruction, and (8) concern for student morale.

Staff Development

The school has a staff development program that is responsive to the unique needs of the students and school personnel, the characteristics of the educational program, and the student performance goals of the school improvement plan.

- PS 30 All school personnel are provided staff development commensurate with their assignment.
- PS 31 Staff development programs are designed through needs assessments with input from school personnel in planning and evaluating of the programs.
- PS 32 Orientation is provided for all personnel new to the building.
- PS 33 A staff development plan is in place and staff development activities are connected to and supportive of the school's improvement plan.

Assessment

The school has an assessment system that is broad in scope and appropriate to document student development. The results of assessment are used to (a) establish a teaching-learning program that reflects the strengths, interests, and needs of the students and community; (b) improve student performance; and (c) determine the degree to which the school is successful in achieving its goals.

- PS 40 Through written reports and individual conferences, parents are informed frequently and regularly about student progress.

- PS 41 The school uses a variety of measures including classroom and standardized measures to document the success of its students.
- PS 42 Assessment measures are congruent with the learning goals.
- PS 43 Students receive regular and frequent feedback on their progress.
- PS 44 Assessment of student learning is the primary indicator for documenting the effectiveness of the overall school program.
- PS 45 The school collects information from entering students to help establish a teaching-learning program that is ready to accommodate all learners.

Pupil Personnel Services

Pupil personnel services are comprehensive and designed to enhance the intellectual, personal, physical, social, and career development of all students.

- PS 50 Pupil personnel services include but are not limited to counseling, appraisal, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning.
- PS 51 The school regularly conducts an inventory and diagnosis of students who have physical, social-emotional, mental, or academic characteristics that require specialized services, and the school participates in delivering these services.
- PS 52 The school has a well-planned health services program available to all students, including the services of a nurse.
- PS 53 The school has specified procedures to be followed in case of accidents, emergencies, and disasters.
- PS 54 The school has the necessary professional and support pupil personnel services staff to implement the program consistent with the needs of the student population.
- PS 55 Appropriate materials, facilities, and services are available throughout the school and/or district for students whose exceptional abilities, talents, or handicaps represent unique needs.
- PS 56 The school has a written description of the school counseling and guidance program specifying the guidance services performed and the personnel delivering these services.
- PS-v 57 Interests and needs inventories are used in the counseling and guidance of individual students. For those students admitted on the basis of **ability to benefit**, the assessment includes student aptitude which documents the potential to successfully complete the student's declared program. Note: The assessment for ability to benefit students must be a nationally recognized, standardized, or industry-developed admissions test.
- PS-v 58 Each member school provides organized guidance services to aid present and prospective students in the solution of their various types of educational, vocational, occupational, social, civic, and personal problems. **Ability to benefit** students are closely monitored during their initial year to ensure their capacity to complete the program to which they have been admitted.
- PS-v 59 The school's guidance services supplement those provisions available in the other participating schools for counseling, appraisal, staff consulting, educational and occupational planning, and follow-up activities.
- PS-v 60 The member vocational/adult school provides qualified guidance counselors at a ratio of at least one counselor for each 450 students (full-time equivalency) with no school having less than a half-time counselor. Vocational/adult schools are encouraged to try a variety of approaches to augment guidance services, including individual school ratio adjustments. They may use counselors, job placement officers, supportive personnel, and teachers. Instructors with occupational backgrounds can serve in a valuable occupational counselor role. Such plans for organizational variations are submitted to the State Committee for approval.

- PS-v 61 The vocational/adult school provides organized and systematic counseling and placement services for those students seeking further education and/or job placement.

Student Activities Program

The North Central Association recognizes the value of leisure, co-curricular, and extra-classroom activities as components of a successful comprehensive educational program. The trend towards a reduced work week as well as the increasing numbers of persons who elect early retirement combine to present the vocational/adult school with unusual opportunities to provide wholesome leisure and special interest activities.

Though it is not the primary purpose or obligation of the vocational/adult school to meet the above needs, they fall within its purview. Leisure, co-curricular, and extra-classroom activities foster valuable community and school involvement; encourage an intellectual, cultural, and social climate which develops leadership and social interaction skills; and encourage special student interests.

Therefore, whenever appropriate, the school offers leisure-time educational activities appropriate to the needs of its community. Moreover, it maintains a program of co-curricular activities appropriate to its own objectives and program and designed to make a positive contribution to the educational development of its students.

- PS-v 70 A well-balanced program provides opportunity for student participation in a variety of activities including special interest clubs, vocational youth organizations, physical activities, student government, and cultural affairs. Efforts are made to prevent domination of activities by a few students, and each sponsored activity serves valid educational and occupational purposes.
- PS-v 71 The administration and supervision of all school-sponsored activities are delegated by the governing board to the administration and faculty. All such activities are provided with qualified sponsors who are employees of the school or non-employees who have been approved by the appropriate administrator.
- PS-v 72 The programs of leisure activities reflect the special needs of patrons of the school and are designed to serve the needs of the community.

VISION, LEADERSHIP-GOVERNANCE, AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The school community consists of the school's faculty and staff, its students and their parents, and the other adults in the community served by that school. The school's leadership works with the school community for the improvement of student success. The school community's vision is expressed through its statements of mission, goals, and current improvement initiatives. Such improvement initiatives require the school community to regularly assess and act upon its student performance data and to use these data to plan and implement programs that are effective in attaining the goals of the school and the NCA CASI Standard. All members of the school community share the responsibility for improving student success.

Vision

The governing board, working with the school staff and community, develops and maintains a written statement of mission and goals to be served by the educational program.

- VL 1 There is a written statement of the school's beliefs about the nature of young people, the learning process, and the commitments of the school community in promoting student learning.
- VL 2 There is a written statement of the school's mission and goals, consistent and compatible with the mission and goals of the district governing board, which is the governing document for the school and its programs.
- VL 3 The mission and goals statement is developed through appropriate participation by the school staff, parents, students, and community representatives.
- VL 4 The mission and goals statement clarifies the purpose of the school.

- VL 5 Provision is made for annual review and, when necessary, modification of the mission and goals statement.

Leadership-Governance

Superintendent refers to the school or district's chief executive/administrative officer; principal refers to the building administrator. Under certain circumstances they may be one and the same.

- VL 10 There is a school or district governing board that develops policies appropriate to the needs of the school/district. Whether elected or appointed, representatives on the governing board represent the interests of the school community.
- VL 11 Individual board members do not engage in transactions for the school/district without prior and specific authorization by a majority of the governing board.
- VL 12 The school is part of a system with a superintendent who is responsible for providing effective educational leadership and administering the schools/district in accordance with governing board policies.
- VL 13 The working relationships between the governing board and the superintendent establish a climate for articulating and promoting the educational vision of the district in the school community.
- VL 14 The superintendent works to mobilize the entire school community to provide high quality education for students.
- VL 15 The governing board, superintendent, and district-level administration work to secure resources to support continued improvement initiatives in the schools/district.
- VL 16 The school has a principal responsible for organizing the school's program to improve student performance and having the authority and resources to accomplish this goal.
- VL 17 The working relationship between the superintendent and principal facilitates the effective operation of the school in pursuit of its mission.
- VL 18 The principal, staff, and community work together to attain the mission and goals of the school.
- VL 19 The working relationships between the principal and staff facilitate a school climate that supports innovation and creativity in helping all students achieve the specified learning goals.

School Community

The school establishes meaningful relationships with its community to promote and enhance the achievement of the school's learning goals.

- VL 25 There is a planned public communications program using a variety of media to inform the school community about the goals, programs, and results of the school's improvement efforts.
- VL 26 The school and community work together to provide the highest quality education for its students.
- VL 27 There is a planned and functioning program whereby community resources are identified and utilized for the enhancement of the curricular program in achieving the goals of the school and the NCA CASI Standard.
- VL 28 The school provides students with the opportunity to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real-life service-learning experiences that address actual community needs.
- VL-v 29 An advisory committee representative of the school community is involved in the review and planning of the school's educational program. The role of the advisory committee is consistent with state and federal guidelines.

RESOURCES AND ALLOCATION

The space, facilities, and environment of the school are safe for students and of a size, configuration, and condition to properly serve the attainment of the goals of the school. Those people serving students are qualified to do so through documented training and experience. Sufficient time is organized so that the school community's mission, goals, and current improvement initiatives can be fulfilled. A coordinated system designed to increase students' access to information and expand their knowledge base is available. Sufficient financial resources are available to provide space, people, time, materials, and instructional programs to maximize the potential for all students to make successful life transitions.

Time

- RA-v 1 Interruptions to instructional time are kept to a minimum, and the amount of time devoted to student learning is maximized.
- RA-v 2 Planning/conference time is used appropriately so that staff may effectively meet the needs of students.
- RA-v 3 Within the basic school day, each classroom teacher's schedule includes one period daily or not less than 200 minutes per week for conferences and instructional planning. The preparation period must be included within the framework of the total school day. The standard does not apply to people involved in special services such as administrators, counselors, librarians, and to people in certain vocational and special education areas as approved by the NCA CASI State Committee and under the state plan nor does it apply to teachers teaching fewer than 25 hours per week.
- RA-v 4 A member school organizes its schedule of classes in a pattern most appropriate to achieving the objectives of the program and may provide varying time periods as need arises. Time periods must conform to state requirements.
- RA-v 5 The length of the regular school year for vocational school students is at least 180 days, with classes actually in session for at least 175 days. The length of the school year for adult schools is a minimum of 30 weeks.
- RA-v 6 A school day for vocational students must be at least six clock hours. Students may be assigned for all or any portion of this time. Adult schools must offer classes a minimum of three hours per day for four days each week during the 30 weeks. However, alternate plans may be presented to the State Committee for consideration and approval. The sharing of the student's time between an area vocational center and a sending high school is endorsed.
- RA-v 7 The adult instructional program recognizes the wide diversity of student interests and experiences, providing for independent instruction and continuous study in addition to formal classes based on daily, weekly, semester, or quarterly schedules.

Space

- RA-v 10 All space and facilities utilized by the school are of appropriate size, configuration, and condition to enhance the achievement of the goals of the school.
- RA-v 11 The site and facilities provide a safe and healthful environment with proper provisions taken to prevent injuries. Power and electrical equipment meet state and federal standards. Personal safety equipment is provided and its use enforced.
- RA-v 12 Fire, police, health, or other designated officials conduct regular safety inspections. All legal safety requirements are observed.
- RA-v 13 Inspections of the site, building, and equipment and evaluation of the safety and emergency procedures are conducted regularly. Identified hazards and deficiencies are dealt with promptly.
- RA-v 14 Provision is made for security and safety of students in terms of both in-school disorder and external intrusion.

- RA-v 15 The site is readily accessible to the school population; as free as possible from traffic, other hazards, and distracting noise; and of sufficient size.
- RA-v 16 The building is clean, attractive, in good repair, and (where required) barrier free to serve the needs of all students.
- RA-v 17 Recognized standards and legal requirements for heating, ventilation, and illumination are met.
- RA-v 18 School facilities and equipment are appropriate in size, type, and quantity for the students attending the school including students with special needs. Appropriate space is provided for storage, materials preparation, and consultation.
- RA-v 19 The buildings and grounds are maintained with consideration for functional and aesthetic values.
- RA-v 20 Permanent records of students and staff are protected from theft, fire, or other damage.
- RA-v 21 School facilities are open, as necessary to accomplish the mission and goals of the school, for extended hours and days for student and public use.
- RA-v 22 In cases in which a secondary program and an adult program share facilities but are separately administered, the proper school authority clarifies each administrator's area of responsibility.
- RA-v 23 The facilities used in the vocational-adult education program are adequately supplied with equipment sufficiently modern and usable to effect sound instructional/learning programs.
- RA-v 24 An appropriate schedule for the replacement of equipment is established and maintained.

Personnel

- RA-v 30 The school staff is of sufficient quality and number and appropriately assigned so that the school can achieve the goals of the school.
- RA-v 31 Schools enrolling fewer than 250 students (full-time equivalency) employ an administrative head who devotes at least half time to the administration and supervision of the school. Schools enrolling 250 or more students (full-time equivalency) employ a full-time administrative head. The school system designates (by whatever title it chooses) a head who has the authority and responsibility for organizing and directing the vocational and/or adult education program within the district.
- RA-v 32 In order to permit the school administrator to have sufficient time to engage in improvement of instruction, assistance is provided as follows: When on a full-time equivalency basis enrollment exceeds 500, at least one half-time assistant; when enrollment exceeds 1,000 students, at least one full-time assistant. Therefore, for each additional 1,000 students or major fraction thereof, at least one full-time assistant is provided.
Schools may vary their approaches to administrative staffing and submit their plan to the State Committee for approval.
In districts in which the superintendent also serves as the building administrator, at least one half-time assistant is to be added to these requirements.
- RA-v 33 The school is in compliance with state and federal laws regarding equal employment opportunities.

Preparation and Qualifications

- RA-v 40 All professional personnel hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution, meet the regular certification standards of the state or the equivalent, and are assigned to teach in areas for which they are prepared.
- RA-v 41 All teachers in vocational/adult schools meet the requirements for instructors as established by the appropriate state governing body. All baccalaureate degrees have been earned from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association.
- RA-v 42 Teachers in diploma-completion programs, GED programs, and subjects for which NCA CASI requirements have been established must meet those standards (generally 24 semester hours in the field).
- RA-v 43 Teaching Fields: Vocational teachers in the following fields have the minimum number of semester hours of credit hereinafter prescribed in order to qualify for teaching assignments in their respective fields.
Agriculture: 24 semester hours in agriculture.

- Business: 24 semester hours in business with at least one college course in each high school subject assigned (with the exception of vocational business courses not routinely taught in a comprehensive high school; these teachers must meet the requirements set forth in the state plan).
- Drafting, General Drawing, Mechanical Drawing (Non-Vocational): 18 semester hours in drawing or 20 semester hours in industrial arts including at least 5 hours in drawing. The teacher may also qualify by combining art and/or industrial arts to total 20 semester hours.
- Electronics (Non-Vocational): These teachers must be qualified in either science or industrial arts with appropriate coursework in the general area of electronics.
- Family and Consumer Science: 24 semester hours in the field (with the exception of vocational home economics courses; these teachers must meet the requirements set forth in the state plan).
- Industrial Technology: 20 semester hours in industrial technology including at least one course in each subject taught.
- Driver Education, Industrial Education (Vocational), Remedial Teachers, Special Education, and others: Teachers of these subjects, and of all other subjects for which NCA CASI requirements have not been established, will be approved by the Commission if they hold a certificate for the respective field issued by the state in which they are teaching. In the absence of such state certification, approval is left to the judgment of the State Committee.
- Teachers of Other Subjects: These teachers must meet the requirements noted in the state plan or requirements of the appropriate state governing body.
- RA-v 44 Counselor: Professional staff members employed as guidance counselors have at least 18 semester hours of graduate preparation in guidance and counseling.
- RA-v 45 Media Specialists: Media specialists in adult schools meet state teacher certification requirements and have earned a minimum of 18 semester hours of library/media coursework. Persons employed principally as audio-visual specialists have at least 12 semester hours of credit in this field. In vocational schools, media specialists have specific educational preparation appropriate to the needs of the media program in each school.
- RA-v 46 Health Personnel: Members of the non-instructional professional staff providing health services meet the health certification requirements of the state in which the school is located.
- RA-v 47 The administrative head of the school has earned at least 45 hours of graduate credit, inclusive of the master's degree, or has met the requirements established by the state plan for vocational, technical, and adult education and was serving as the head of a vocational/adult school prior to December 1, 1971. Not less than 20 semester hours of graduate credit has been in administration, curriculum, supervision and related fields. The administrative head has a minimum of two years of successful teaching experience. It is desirable that the administrative head be acquainted with the field of vocational education through preparation or work experience. In addition, she/he must hold an appropriate supervisory (administrative) certificate when such is required by state statute or by the state plan.
- RA-v 48 Assistants in charge of curriculum, instruction, and general administration have at least the master's degree including training in secondary-level school administration, supervision, curriculum, and guidance. Other administrative assistants have preparation or experience appropriate to their responsibilities. It is desirable that all assistants be acquainted with the field of vocational education through preparation or work experience.
- RA-v 49 In adult high schools scheduling 25 or fewer hours per week, the administrative head has at least the master's degree, including work in such areas as adult education, administration, supervision, and curriculum.
- RA-v 50 Secondary Teaching Staff. Teachers have 24 semester hours in the field (agriculture, art, business, English, each foreign language, health, family and consumer sciences, industrial technology, mathematics, music, physical education, science, social studies). Coursework is appropriately distributed for each subject taught.
- RA-v 51 Special education. Teachers hold a valid certificate for the respective field in which they are teaching.
- RA-v 52 All other subjects. Teachers of other subjects for which NCA CASI requirements have not been established are approved if they hold state certification or have a minimum of 9 semester hours in the subject.
- RA-v 53 Class size is adapted to the requirements of the specific course.
- RA-v 54 The teaching load is such that teachers have adequate time to perform their duties. Except in certain activity-type classes such as typewriting, physical education, and music, the average pupil load for a teacher does not exceed 160 pupils daily.

Finances

- RA-v 60 Sufficient financial resources are available to accomplish the mission and goals of the school.
- RA-v 61 All income and expenditures are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and are audited annually or as required by law.
- RA-v 62 The budget is based upon an assessment of resources needed to accomplish the mission and goals of the school.
- RA-v 63 The principal and faculty are involved in developing the budget, in establishing expenditure allocations, and in setting priorities with the budget.
- RA-v 64 In analyzing the resources needed, the school makes appropriate use of community resources and community advisory groups.
- RA-v 65 In order to become a member school and to continue to qualify for accreditation, the school enrolls a sufficient number of students and employs an adequate number of qualified staff. The minimum program in breadth of curriculum offerings, student activities, and student personnel services is stipulated elsewhere in these standards.
- RA-v 66 All coursework required in the diploma completion program is provided, even though board funds may have to be used in cases where student fees are not sufficient to make the course self-supporting.
- RA-v 67 The budget includes adequate funds for the necessary amortization of equipment purchases over a reasonable period of time.

Instructional Resources

Students have access to a broad range of information through an organized media and technology program that makes maximum use of local, state, national, and international resources.

- RA-v 70 Member schools employ a professionally prepared individual as learning center coordinator. Schools exceeding 500 full-time students (full-time equivalency) have a full-time professionally prepared coordinator. The professional staff provides such services as instructing students in the use of the center, assisting teachers in locating and utilizing resources, and overseeing the production of graphic and other materials. Upon approval of the State Committee, the school may use an alternative staffing pattern if the school schedule or relationship with sending schools warrants such a variation.
- RA-v 71 A sufficient collection of books exclusive of the adopted texts and appropriate for the school's instructional needs is provided.
- RA-v 72 Educational materials may be stored in a central library/resource center and/or decentralized print resource area. Other library resources in the community may be considered in determining the sufficiency of the print material collection, provided they are readily accessible to the students.
- RA-v 73 The annual expenditures for all media are adequate to meet the instructional needs of the vocational/adult school.
- RA-v 74 Ongoing instruction is provided for staff and students to ensure effective and appropriate use of all materials available through the center.
- RA-v 75 Provision is made for equipment, basic materials, space, and instruction for the staff and students in designing and producing instructional/ learning materials. Provision is made for the replacement and updating of all materials.
- RA-v 76 Media and technology materials and equipment are available to staff and students throughout the school day and throughout the school year. If the library/instructional materials center is being shared with a day/evening school, the vocational/adult students have full borrowing privileges.

Information Technology

- RA-v 77 The school has an ongoing instructional technology plan that addresses utilization, staff development, effectiveness, and the needs of all students and staff.

- RA-v 78 The instructional technology plan includes a budget that is realistic for the needs of students and prepares them for living and learning in the 21st century.
- RA-v 79 The school has access to current technology to continually expand its information base.
- RA-v 80 All technology resources are conveniently accessible to all students, faculty, and staff and are integrated across the curriculum.
- RA-v 81 Personnel with appropriate expertise are available to assist students and staff in making effective use of all technology resources.

PERFORMANCE ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

The NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement Standard

The NCA CASI Standard—to maximize the proportion of promoted or graduated students who are self-directed learners and are prepared to make successful school-to-school or school-to-career transitions—is a single overriding commitment to excellence. NCA CASI has specific membership and improvement criteria in place to help schools develop their capacity to achieve the Standard.

A Performance Accreditation Framework

The Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement challenges all candidate schools and member schools to pursue the intent of the Standard by utilizing the performance accreditation framework. The NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework focuses on designing and implementing quality school, district, or system improvement processes and on documenting enhanced student performance.¹

The performance accreditation framework is based on three assumptions:

- Schools are at differing stages as they progress through the school improvement framework.
- The school improvement process promotes continuous growth.
- Building upon certain capacities within the school will enhance its ability to implement quality school improvement activities that lead to improved student performance.

The NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework promotes growth through a transitions process for both the individual student and the school/system. For students, the transitions are from school to school and school to career. Schools/systems that transition from one stage in the improvement framework to another build upon their capacity to improve as an organization. For both students and schools, the results of school improvement are growth and enhanced student performance.

School Capacities

There are five major capacities that specify the policies, procedures, conditions, and resources needed by a school to initiate and sustain the NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework. The capacities include:

1. School Improvement Plan (SIP)
2. Information System (IS)
3. Process of Schooling (PS)
4. Vision, Leadership-Governance, and School Community (VL)
5. Resources and Allocation (RA)

Each of these five capacities has two types of criteria—membership and improvement.

The **membership criteria** are those requirements considered to be essential to the function of a school or system. Member schools must meet all of the membership criteria. The school will be asked to attest to the fulfillment of these membership criteria via the Annual Report System.

The **improvement criteria** are considered necessary for a school to initiate and sustain a continuous improvement effort focused on improved student performance. Thus, as the school analyzes its improvement needs, the extent to which it has achieved the intent of the improvement criteria is an important component. Schools will vary in terms of implementation of the improvement criteria. NCA CASI's focus is on helping schools move from an entry stage to an exemplary stage of school improvement over time. Improvement criteria are verified via the Annual Report System and during on-site reviews.

Stages of School Improvement

The capacities listed above are considered critical components of school improvement. A school may be at different stages of development within each capacity. Therefore, the performance accreditation framework has four stages that recognize increasing readiness to engage in school improvement. The school or system is expected to document progression in these stages over time. The stages are:

- Stage 1 Emerging Capacity for Improvement. The school has implemented its improvement plan and is able to document enhanced student performance for at least one goal.
- Stage 2 Developing Capacity for Improvement. The school has implemented its improvement plan and is able to document enhanced student performance for some of the goals.
- Stage 3 Increasing Capacity for Improvement. The school has implemented its improvement plan and is able to document enhanced student performance for all of the student performance goals. The school demonstrates continued growth relative to the NCA CASI Standard.
- Stage 4 Exemplary Capacity for School Improvement. The school has implemented its improvement plan and credentials individual students in academics, career awareness, and employability skills. The NCA CASI model for Stage 4 is Transitions.

Capacity Assessment Instrument

The NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework asks the school to document continued growth in its capacity to engage in high quality improvement activities. The *Capacity Assessment Instrument* lists specific indicators to assist both the school and the peer review team in assessing the school's capacity.

The school is required to use the *Capacity Assessment Instrument* as a self-assessment in advance of the initial and final peer review team visits. The peer review team must complete the instrument at the time of the initial and final peer review visits, also.

The *Capacity Assessment Instrument* is in the Team Chair software that was given to all member schools in the fall of 2000. The assessment can be downloaded from the web at the following address: <http://www.ncacasi.org>

Rubrics for Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria and Rubrics have been developed to assist the school and the peer review team in evaluating the school's effort in the performance accreditation framework. The rubrics can be found in the Team Chair software given to member schools, and they are available online at <http://www.ncacasi.org>

Requirement: The peer review team must complete the applicable Evaluation Criteria and Rubrics at the time of the initial and final peer review team visits.

District Accreditation

A district interested in systemic school improvement may pursue district accreditation. The district must have all schools enrolled as members or it must be working toward all-school membership via an affiliate agreement with the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. Additionally, district accreditation requires the following:

1. The board of education, working with and through the school staff, parents, and community at large, establishes a vision for education in the community, identifies district-wide goals to advance that vision, and establishes an accountability system to document and monitor achievement of those goals.
2. The district establishes a district improvement committee whose members are drawn from the individual building steering committees. A district coordinator is selected to oversee the improvement efforts.
3. Each school has improvement goals that complement the district focus and goals.
4. There is continuity among elementary, middle level, and high school improvement efforts. These efforts involve collaborative planning among the three levels.
5. An external team visits the district at least once in every five years to monitor the district goals, the attainment of the goals, and the functioning of the district committee.

PROTOCOL

Rationale

The protocol is designed to provide a uniform structure for continuous school improvement.

Common Elements

1. An improvement cycle for a member school is five years, and within this cycle the school hosts a minimum of two peer review visits.
2. The minimum time for the two peer review visits is a total of two full days over the course of the improvement cycle.
3. The peer review visits provide technical review and assistance to the school staff.
4. The purposes of the peer visits are to provide technical review, to provide assistance in designing the school improvement plan, to collect data about the degree of implementation of the school improvement plan, and to verify results. Specifically, the peer review provides assistance in meeting the following NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement requirements:
 - a. Pursue improvement criteria.
 - b. Develop a school profile.
 - c. Select challenging student performance goals.
 - d. Identify appropriate assessments.
 - e. Determine effective interventions/strategies.
 - f. Implement the school improvement plan.
 - g. Document performance results.
5. Each state office is responsible for developing a process to validate the membership criteria for all schools.
6. Assessing capacity: Schools applying for membership will assess their capacity to undertake school improvement using the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*. The examination team will review the assessment and make a recommendation to the state office regarding the school's capacity to implement the performance accreditation framework.
7. Candidate and member schools design and begin implementation of the performance accreditation framework during the beginning phases of the cycle. The school/system documents in a variety of ways that its student performance goals are met. The school/system also documents that a continuous effort exists in working toward the standard of maximizing student performance and preparing students to make successful transitions.

The School:¹

1. Completes the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*. (Completing the assessment as an initial activity applies only to schools in their first cycle of school improvement.)
2. Develops a school profile by collecting data that are relevant to improving student performance. Analyzes these data to identify strengths and needs.

3. Develops a mission statement and identifies core educational beliefs.
4. Selects goals based on the analysis of the profile. The NCA CASI state offices review and approve the goals selected by the school. NCA CASI recognizes that some goals (i.e., mandated goals) may not be based on profile data. In those cases, data should be collected relevant to those goals.
5. Develops an improvement plan with appropriate assessments, strategies/interventions, and documentation.
6. Completes the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*.
7. Hosts the first peer review visit. The purpose of this visit is to provide technical assistance and to assist in the design of the improvement plan. Specifically, the team reviews and comments on the student performance goals, assessments, strategies/interventions, and documentation plans. In addition, improvement criteria are validated via the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*.
8. Implements the school improvement plan.
9. Documents growth on the goals throughout the course of the improvement cycle.
10. At the conclusion of the improvement cycle, the school prepares a documentation report that focuses on the degree of growth for each goal.
11. Hosts the second peer review visit. The purpose of this visit is to examine and verify performance results found in the documentation report for each student performance goal and to assist the school in its continuing improvement efforts. The school's readiness to engage in improvement is again examined via the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*.
12. The documentation report, as verified by the peer review team, and the written report of the peer review visit are both sent to the NCA CASI state office.

The Peer Review Team Chairperson

1. Peer review team chairs will be trained and certified in the NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement school process prior to serving a member school.
2. The state office, in consultation with the host school, assigns a peer review team chairperson during the year preceding the peer review visits. No professional employed by the district may serve as the chair for the peer review visits.
3. The peer review team chairperson serves as the improvement facilitator and is responsible for the following:
 - a. Consulting with the school leadership team prior to a peer review team visit.
 - b. Providing initial review of the goals selected by the school.
 - c. Scheduling the peer review visits.
 - d. Orienting the peer reviewers.
 - e. Leading the peer review process
 - f. Delivering the exit reports to the school staff and community.
 - g. Preparing the written reports of the peer review visits.

The Peer Reviewers

1. The team chair, the state office, and the principal/superintendent of the host school collaborate on the selection of peer reviewers.
2. Peer reviewers are selected based on their technical expertise and experience in the specific goal areas chosen.
3. The majority of the peer reviewers should be classroom teachers, administrators, or specialists working within schools.

4. The number of peer reviewers is based on the number of goals selected and the size of the school.

Reviewing the School Portfolio

At the conclusion of a school improvement cycle, the NCA CASI state/intra-regional office will prepare a portfolio for each school. The contents will include:

1. A copy of the school's three-year violation history.
2. The Peer Review Chairperson's Contact Visit Report
 - Profile Evaluation Summary
 - Mission Evaluation Summary
 - Student Performance Goal Summary
 - Non-Student Performance Goal Summary
3. The First Peer Review Team Visit Report
 - School Capacity Assessment Instrument (Graphed results of first administration or of the second administration from the previous cycle.)
 - For each goal, Assessments Evaluation Summary, Interventions Evaluation Summary, and Staff Development Summary
4. The Peer Review Team Documentation Visit Report
 - School Documentation Report
 - School Capacity Assessment Instrument (Graphed results of second administration of the current cycle.)

The state/intra-regional committee is responsible for reviewing each portfolio and making accreditation recommendations. A sample of each state's portfolios and recommendations are reviewed each year via the review processes established by the Commission.

District Improvement Plans

In districts or systems where all schools are NCA CASI members, a comprehensive improvement plan with common goals may be developed. In such cases, a coordinated team visit may be utilized. Development of the district profile, selection of goals, documentation of assessment data, and management of the process may be developed at the district level. Peer reviewers should visit each member school to discuss interventions and assessments particular to that school.

Collaboration with State Departments of Education

The NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement recognizes that it is desirable to collaborate with a state department of education in the conduct of school improvement activities. If the nature of this collaboration necessitates a substantive departure from the common protocol, the state office shall submit an alternate protocol to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

APPENDIX A

PROVISIONS FOR GRANTING CREDIT

Semester Hour: This is the amount of credit given for the successful completion of a course that meets one period per week for one semester of at least 18 weeks. A course that meets five periods per week for two semesters, therefore, would permit a student to earn 10 semester hours of credit.

Carnegie Unit: This is the amount of credit given for the successful completion of a course that meets 40 minutes daily, five days per week, for at least 36 weeks, or the equivalent amount of time within the school year. The equivalent time is 120 clock hours.

Credit by Performance: The school establishes guidelines by which credit may be given on a performance basis by means of approved assessments of varying kinds covering the content ordinarily included in a regular school course in the subject. A school also may use assessments as the basis for admission of students with educational experience for which transcripts of credit are not available.

Acceptance of Instructional Credits: A member school will accept credit earned by students from schools or programs accredited by one of the six regional accrediting associations. The school will determine which, if any, of the accepted credits will meet local requirements (e.g., graduation, honors, athletics). Each district (or school if there is no district structure) will establish and have available to the public a policy on the acceptance of credits from schools or programs not accredited by one of the six regional accrediting associations.

Independent Study Programs: The school may provide planned programs of independent learning in which students need not attend classes a specific amount of time during a semester. In such instances, credit may be granted for satisfactory performance on proficiency examinations or for successful completion of curricular units, steps, or phases established by the school as comprising the equivalency of a unit of work.

Work-Study Programs: Credit may be given provided the program is under the supervision of the school.

Study Abroad: Students who have attended secondary schools in another country for one or more semesters may have their credits verified by evaluation of their foreign transcript by the principal or by passing an examination given by a teacher in the high school to which they are transferring. The same procedure applies to credits earned through the American Field Service International Program.

Credit through Military Experiences: The school may, in accordance with the established policies of the state department of education, grant units of credit towards graduation for the following types of educational experiences received while in military service:

1. United States Armed Forces Institute courses.
2. United States Armed Forces Institute subject examinations.
3. High school courses offered through USAFI by cooperating colleges and universities: credit upon transfer from the school offering the course.
4. Marine Corps Institute courses.

5. Basic or recruit training accepted in lieu of required courses in physical education and health.
6. Service school training.
7. PREP (Pre-discharge Education Program), but only when provided by a regionally accredited secondary school.

Credit through Extension, Correspondence, and Televised Courses. The school may accept credit earned by a student through correspondence or extension study towards satisfying the requirements for graduation, providing the course has been approved by the principal in advance of the student's enrollment. Such credit is earned through the satisfactory completion of courses offered by an institution accredited by the NCA CASI or one of the other regional accrediting associations.

Each district (or school if there is no district structure) shall establish and have available to the public a policy on the acceptance of credit from courses taken through extension, correspondence, television, or distance learning (Internet, software).

Credit for Summer School Study: The school may offer summer school courses for credit or accept summer school credits earned in some other accredited high school. If a school operates a summer school, the courses offered are under the instruction of teachers and the supervision of administrators who meet NCA CASI criteria.

APPENDIX B

POLICIES OF THE COMMISSION

The purposes of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement are to develop and maintain the standard and criteria for accreditation that ensure the preconditions for quality education and to foster school improvement. Below are the Commission's policies to be followed in the accrediting of schools.

POLICY I: ACCREDITATION

A school shall be accredited on the basis of its meeting the policies, standard, and criteria of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. The Commission recognizes that unique circumstances of individual schools may result in accreditation with a deviation noted.

POLICY II: PERIOD OF ACCREDITATION

A school is accredited for one year at a time, which is always the current school year. However, its certificate of membership is valid as long as the school continues to satisfy the conditions for accreditation established by the Commission and is fully approved or accredited by the legally constituted or recognized accrediting agency in the state. If a state accrediting agency uses a multiple classification, a school must qualify for the class designated by the state committee as appropriate in that state.

A school that has withdrawn, been discontinued, or is dropped during the Annual Meeting has its accreditation officially terminated. When a school loses its approval or accreditation by the legally constituted or recognized accrediting agency within the state, it becomes subject to the usual accredited-warned and dropped procedures.

In any public announcement regarding the school's accreditation status, the accredited school must avoid using the term "fully accredited." The Commission does not grant "partial" accreditation. The school must also avoid any future projection of the term "accreditation" since the Commission's procedures require an annual renewal of accreditation.

In any public announcements regarding the school's accreditation status, the candidacy status school must avoid any implication that candidacy status equates with accreditation or automatically leads to accreditation.

POLICY III: CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL STATUS

The accreditation status of member schools shall be reviewed annually. Based upon an analysis of its annual report, on which all violations of policies or criteria must be cited, and such additional information as the Commission may require, a member school shall be classified in one of the following categories each year at the Annual Meeting:

1. **Accredited.** A school shall be classified as Accredited when it meets the requirements of all policies and criteria or when, in the opinion of the Commission, it fails to meet one or more of the policies or criteria and the resulting deficiency does not detract to a serious degree from the quality of the school's educational program.

2. **Accredited-Warned.** A school shall be classified as Accredited-Warned when in the judgment of the Commission: (a) it fails to meet one or more of the policies or criteria and the resulting deficiency seriously detracts from the quality of the school's educational program, (b) it consistently fails to remove or make substantial progress towards removing all deficiencies noted the previous year, (c) it consistently violates policies or criteria, or (d) it deliberately and unnecessarily violates one or more of the policies or criteria.
3. The period of warning is for one academic year. If by the next Annual Meeting the cause for warning has not been corrected, the school will be dropped from membership in the Association, except under extraordinary circumstances when a second warning may be given. A state committee may recommend a school for second warning only after receipt of written documentation from the school, including endorsement by the superintendent, attesting to the fact that it is the intent of the school to remove the cause for warning prior to the next Annual Meeting. A second warning may be given only by means of a three-fourths vote of the members of the Board of Trustees present at the Annual Meeting.
4. When all schools within the district are warned for a violation beyond the control of the individual school, such as the deterioration of board/staff relationships, the warning shall not become additive as far as the individual school is concerned. However, only under the most extenuating circumstances will a second warning be granted for a district-wide violation.
5. **Withdrawn or Discontinued.** A school which voluntarily requests to withdraw or be discontinued will be classified as "Withdrawn" or "Discontinued" for the records of the Association. A written request approved by the school's governing board shall be made to the state office at least one week prior to the Annual Meeting.
6. **Dropped.** A school that finds it impossible to meet the policies or criteria or refuses to do so in successive years may be dropped from membership. A school shall not be dropped without a one-year warning if it has been accredited continuously for five years, except by a three-fourths vote of the members of the Board of Trustees present at the Annual Meeting.
7. **Candidacy Status.** A school making initial application for membership, but as yet unable to meet fully the policies and criteria for accreditation, may seek candidacy status for a period up to three years. Candidacy status is not equivalent to accreditation. Candidacy status schools will be listed separately in the CASI directory. Candidacy status entitles the school to participate in all NCA CASI open affairs and functions, but does not entitle the school to vote. The following conditions must be met for candidacy status:
 - a. The state committee helps the school ascertain which of the criteria for accreditation it currently is unable to reach, and the school develops a plan for correcting those deficiencies within the period covered by the candidacy status.
 - b. A formal agreement is reached between the school board and the state committee to maintain candidacy status up to a limit of three years.
 - c. The school submits an annual progress report to the state committee. It is continued in candidacy status on the basis of that report, as recommended by the state committee and confirmed by the reviewing process at the Annual Meeting.

- d. The school fulfills other specific requirements for candidacy status as established by the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement.
- e. The school pays full dues for each year it remains in candidacy status.
- f. The school applies for and is granted accreditation sometime during these three years. If the school has not attained membership by the third Annual Meeting following its placement on candidacy status, the status shall be terminated.

POLICY IV: NON-DISCRIMINATORY ADMISSION OF STUDENTS

A school shall not discriminate in its admission of students on the basis of race, ethnic background, sex, or handicap. Nor shall it discriminate on the basis of religion unless the school is officially church-related and wishes to admit students mainly from communicants of that denomination. Schools that have been designed specifically to serve a single sex or that are supported by a state or federal agency to serve a specialized group of students shall not be considered discriminatory.

POLICY V: ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS AND PROGRAMS TO MEET POLICIES AND CRITERIA

A school or school system may prefer to develop formats and approaches that differ substantially from one or more of the accreditation criteria of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. The intent of this policy is to encourage these developments under controlled conditions.

Approval for such formats and approaches shall be sought annually from the state committee. Such variance will be considered and may be approved only when the following conditions are met:

1. The plans for alternative designs and programs are submitted in writing.
2. The purposes and objectives with accompanying activities and procedures are stated.
3. An evaluation process that details evaluation criteria for each of the objectives is built into the plan. When the plan extends beyond one year, the state committee shall review on a yearly basis progress towards the accomplishments of the objectives. The review may include on-site monitoring and verification of progress.

APPENDIX C

PROCEDURES FOR PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE CRITERIA

1. A proposed amendment to any set of eligibility or improvement criteria may be initiated by one of the following:
 - Six member principals in a particular category of schools who sign a petition specifying a particular amendment.
 - A state committee, upon its own motion.
 - The Standards Committee, upon its own motion.
 - The Board of Trustees, upon its own motion, but no later than December preceding the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly.
2. A proposed amendment arising upon the petition of member principals and/or a state committee shall be transmitted, accompanied by the state committee's recommendation, to the Standards Committee which shall consider the proposed amendment and make its own recommendation on it. The Standards Committee shall transmit the proposed amendment to the Board of Trustees accompanied by one of three recommendations: (a) Endorsed, (b) Not Endorsed, (c) On Its Merits [No Recommendation].
3. Amendments arising from the Standards Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Trustees accompanied by one of three recommendations: (a) Endorsed, (b) Not Endorsed, (c) On Its Merits [No Recommendation].
4. The Board of Trustees at its meeting no later than December preceding the next meeting of the Delegate Assembly shall consider each proposed amendment, affixing to it a recommendation: (a) Endorsed, (b) Not Endorsed, (c) On Its Merits [No Recommendation].
5. The Executive Director shall notify each member of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement of the proposed amendment(s) and accompanying recommendations that are to be submitted to the Delegate Assembly of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement at the forthcoming Annual Meeting.
6. The proposed amendment(s) shall be acted upon by the Delegate Assembly through a simple majority vote. (See Appendix C below.)
7. General considerations:
 - a. No amendments to any set of improvement or membership criteria may be proposed in a manner other than that described above.
 - b. A petition to amend may be withdrawn at any stage of this process by a written revocation signed by a majority of the member principals who signed the original petition.
 - c. School members shall vote upon all major/substantial changes to the membership and eligibility criteria for their category of schools. Delegate Assembly members shall vote upon specific and/or individual revisions to the membership and eligibility criteria.

APPENDIX D APPEAL PROCEDURES

Appeal of Decision of the Board of Trustees

A school may appeal a decision by the Board of Trustees to deny accreditation or to drop accreditation on the grounds that such decision is arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in substantial disregard of the criteria or procedures of the Commission; or that such decision is not supported by substantial evidence in the record upon which the Board of Trustees took action. An accredited school remains accredited until the final disposition of the appeal. A school wishing to appeal shall do so in accordance with the procedures set forth below:

1. The school shall file intent to appeal the Board of Trustees' decision within ten (10) days of receipt of the Board of Trustees' decision.
2. The school's written grounds for appeal shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of receipt of the decision. The school's written grounds shall set forth the basis for its appeal. Only evidence previously submitted to the Commission may be included in the submission to the Appeals Panel. New evidence will not be considered by the Appeals Panel.
3. The Appeals Panel will meet within sixty (60) days of receipt of the school's intent to appeal. The school has the option of sending representatives to the hearing, including the school's legal counsel. The school must provide notice of whom it intends to send to the hearing at the time it submits its grounds for appeal. The school may request that the appeal hearing be transcribed. No audio-taping or video-taping of the appeal is permitted. The Executive Director shall make any transcription and other arrangement for the hearing.
4. All expenses of the appeal, including expenses of the panelists, are to be borne fully by the school. The panelists shall not be paid honoraria for their services on the Panel.
5. A Panel of three impartial educators shall be selected by the Executive Director, and confirmed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, to hear the school's appeal. The Panel shall be selected from a standing appeals body composed of ten members who shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees for a term of three (3) years. The Board of Trustees shall appoint to the standing appeals body respected educators who are knowledgeable about CASI requirements and who do not hold any other appointed or elected position with CASI at either the state or regional level. At least one member of the standing appeals body shall be a public member with an interest in education and knowledge of issues pertaining to CASI accredited schools but who has no affiliation to any CASI accredited school. If the school has good cause to believe that any member of the standing appeals body should not hear the school's appeal, it shall notify the Executive Director in writing of the basis for its objection at the time it submits its grounds for appeal. Objections to the composition of the Panel shall be heard and ruled upon by the Chair of the Board in consultation with the Executive Director.
6. The Appeals Panel can either uphold the decision of the Board of Trustees or remand the decision to the Board of Trustees for reconsideration. If the Appeals Panel upholds the decision of the Board of Trustees, the action of the Board of Trustees is final. When the decision to deny or drop accreditation is final, the school is removed from CASI's list of accredited schools. The school and all the appropriate state and federal authorities will be simultaneously notified by CASI of the school's removal from the accredited list within 30 days of the decision. The Appeals Panel will determine its decision by majority vote.

7. If the Appeals Panel remands the decision to the Board of Trustees for further consideration and the Board adheres to its original decision, the matter shall be considered final when acted upon by the Board, unless the decision of the Board of Trustees is based upon grounds that have not been reviewed by the Appeals Panel. In its discretion, the Board of Trustees may refer the matter to the State/Intra-regional Committee that made the original recommendation on the school's accredited status for further consideration.

Procedures Regarding Complaints By and About Schools

Formal procedures for appealing accreditation decisions are available to schools as outlined above. The following procedures shall apply in instances of complaints that are not formal appeals.

1. The Commission does not adjudicate with a school isolated and individual grievances received by the Commission and referring to the school. Complaints of that nature, documented and signed by the person initiating the complaint, will be forwarded to the school. The school shall respond to the complaint within 30 days. A copy of the complaint and the school's response to it will be retained in the files of the appropriate office of the Commission.
2. If several individual complaints against a school suggest a particular pattern of problems which might affect the school's ability to meet the Commission's policy or criteria, the Commission may authorize further investigation. Records of complaints of an individual nature which have received a satisfactory school response will be kept on file in the Commission Office but will not be shared with peer review teams scheduled to review the school unless the Commission believes further monitoring of the situation is needed. Where the Commission authorizes further investigation, the investigation shall occur within 30 days of such authorization.
3. If the Commission believes that a school's response to a complaint does not satisfactorily address the complaint or if a school fails to address the complaint in a timely manner, the information about the complaint may be shared with the peer review team scheduled for the next review of the school or with representatives of the Commission being sent to the school to conduct a special inquiry. The results of these reviews and inquiries may be channeled into the annual accreditation procedures of the Commission if the school is not meeting a requirement of the Commission.
4. Unless supported by documents available to the public, all complaints, to be considered valid, must be signed and must present first-hand knowledge of the substance of the complaint.

Procedures Regarding the Content of Peer Review Reports

Complaints about the content of a report of a peer review team may be submitted in writing to the appropriate Commission office and the complaint may, at the discretion of the Commission, be distributed with copies of the peer review report as long as the complaint is clearly identified as a separate document and as long as the author of the complaint is identified.

APPENDIX E

ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURES OF THE COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

(A copy of the complete *Bylaws* of the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement may be accessed online.)

Published List of Accredited Schools. A list of schools accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement is published on the Commission website: <http://www.ncacasi.org>

Initial Membership. A school seeking initial membership shall follow these steps:

1. Contact the state NCA CASI office for help and further information.
2. Determine the desirability of membership through discussion with the faculty, the principal, the superintendent, and the governing board.
3. Study the standard and criteria for the membership category under which the school is seeking accreditation, consider the implications for the school, and note and correct any deficiencies the school may have in relation to the criteria. (When in the judgment of the state committee a school applying for admission into the North Central Association is of sufficient quality, some minor deviations from policies and criteria will be permitted. The specific deviations, however, shall be reported to the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement for its final action at the Annual Meeting. A school may apply for membership in the North Central Association the same year it graduates its first class.)
4. Make formal application for membership, with written approval of the governing board of the school.
5. Conduct a self-assessment using the *Capacity Assessment Instrument*.
6. Host an examination team visit to assess the capacity of the school to undertake school improvement and to determine the extent to which the school addresses the Standard and Criteria. The team will issue recommendations to the state office regarding the school's attainment of the Standard and Criteria and the school's capacity to address the Performance Accreditation Framework.
7. At a Board of Trustees meeting, be recommended by the state committee for accreditation and membership having undergone a review by a central reviewing committee.
8. Be voted into membership by the Board of Trustees.
9. Remit membership dues to the Commission.

Annual Reporting. A member school is challenged to pursue the intent of the Standard and the Membership and Improvement Criteria via the Protocol and within the parameters of the Performance Accreditation Framework. It is recognized that schools are at varying stages of development. Nevertheless, schools are expected to nurture continuous growth processes and to build upon certain capacities within the school that will enhance improved student performance. These conditions will be reflected through a system of established annual reporting as follows:

1. A school desiring to continue membership shall submit by a date stipulated by the Commission an annual report and such other supplementary reports as the Commission and the state committee find necessary in order to accredit schools. Schools not

- submitting annual reports shall be dropped from membership for the current school year.
2. Each fall, the Commission shall distribute the annual report forms with supplementary instructions and suggestions, check the receipt of reports, and make an initial review of the reports in preparation for review by the state committee. The respective committee shall examine the annual reports from member schools and make recommendations to the Central Review Committee for its consideration during the review of the status of all member schools.
 3. Each member school in its annual report to the Commission is required to list all violations of criteria cited the previous year and to indicate action that has been taken to correct the deficiencies.
 4. The Central Reviewing Committee shall be appointed by the executive director to examine reports on how well each school has observed the policies and criteria of the Commission. The actions being recommended by the respective committee (based on written policies developed by that committee addressing the areas in which committees are given discretion by the *Bylaws*, *Committees of the Commission Handbook*, or the *Standard and Criteria Handbook*) should be consistent among the several states. Where violations do occur, reviewing committee members should ensure that the accreditation category being recommended is similar to the recommendation that could be anticipated in their own states. The reviewing committees shall follow guidelines approved by the Board of Trustees for the review of annual reports.
 5. It shall be the policy of the Commission not to take an action affecting the accreditation of a member school that is different from that recommended by its committee without first consulting with the state director.

Membership Dues and Fees. The Board of Trustees shall establish the dues and fees owed by school members and shall detail the procedures for payment and the steps leading to ineligibility due to the non-payment of said dues and/or fees. (Please see **Article VIII** of the *Bylaws*.)

Reorganized and/or Consolidated Schools and/or Schools Seeking Transfer to Another Set of Standard and Criteria.

1. With the concurrence of the state committee, a consolidated school may claim continuing membership in the North Central Association provided that at least one of the schools involved in the consolidation was a member of the North Central Association at the time of the consolidation. There must be no break in membership.
2. A new school or schools formed by reorganization of a member school may claim membership in the NCA CASI with the concurrence of the state committee. The new school or schools shall be expected to meet all NCA CASI membership requirements as would any other member school. The state committee will determine whether the reorganized school must undergo a full-scale evaluation.
3. A member school so reorganized that is no longer eligible under the set of standard and criteria by which it entered the North Central Association must apply for new membership under the appropriate set of standard and criteria. The procedures for handling the application are determined by the state committee, which may or may not require the full evaluation process preliminary to membership.
4. If a member school has not been reorganized but seeks to transfer to another set of standard and criteria because they are more applicable to the school's mission and purposes, such request for transfer must be initiated by the member school. The school

shall not be required to undergo an immediate evaluation but shall retain its current date for a scheduled evaluation. However, the state committee may require a school examination. The school is to be in compliance with the set of policies to which it is seeking transfer.

Postponement of an Evaluation to Another Cycle. If a member school is granted a postponement of its evaluation to the next cycle, it must conduct a second evaluation during that cycle to keep it in phase. All requests for postponement of an evaluation are to be written communications to the state committee co-signed by the principal and the superintendent.

Transfer of Professional Personnel. Teachers and other professional personnel in school systems having two or more member schools who are transferred from one school to another and who have been approved previously by the Commission will continue to be approved by the Commission if they are assigned to the same teaching fields or professional duties. In the case of experienced teachers who may not have been fully qualified, the administration should encourage them to continue their educational preparation.

Equivalency Certificates Based on the General Educational Development Test. Diplomas or Certificates of Equivalency of High School will be recognized by the Association only when they are issued by or on the authority of a state department of public instruction. Such diplomas or certificates should not indicate graduation from any particular high school.

Disclaimer Page for Written Peer Review Reports. In an effort to preclude the improper use of peer review reports, the “Limitations on the Distribution, Use, and Scope of This Document” must accompany each peer review report. The disclaimer page can be found in the team chair software.

Split (Double) Sessions. Double sessions are not approved except in emergencies and then only temporarily; evidence must be presented showing that plans have been made to remedy the situation.

Host Nation Teachers and Foreign Nationals. Qualified host nation teachers may be permitted to teach a second foreign language, and qualified nationals may teach a third foreign language where explanation of the circumstances is provided by the school. Native teachers, if qualified, may be employed to teach in adult evening high schools.

Graduates of an Institution Prior to Its Accreditation. An individual graduating from a college or university prior to the time of its accreditation is not a graduate of an accredited institution. In order to validate a degree earned at an unaccredited institution, the individual must enroll in an accredited institution and pursue a recommended program until the MA degree is awarded.

Proficiency Examinations. A teacher may qualify to teach a certain subject by taking and passing a proficiency examination provided an accredited college certifies that the teacher has demonstrated competency equal to one having completed the required preparation. Successful completion of an advanced course in typewriting and/or shorthand will demonstrate proficiency.

Use of Lay Aides and Paraprofessionals. Lay aides and paraprofessionals may be used in the school wherever it is legal and appropriate.

Definition of School Year. The school year for participation in contests and activities is officially defined as the date a school opens in the fall and closes in the spring, including vacations during this time period.

Grace Period for Administrators. Wherever permissible under state certification laws or regulations, any person newly employed as a principal or superintendent in an NCA CASI school is granted up to two years to complete the full graduate-hour requirement. However, the person must complete the necessary graduate hours by the end of the two-year grace period or the school shall be warned unless documentation of reasonable progress being made in meeting the criteria is accepted by the state committee.

Conflicts of Interest. It shall be the policy of the Board of Trustees and the Commission that all consultants, administrative staff, board members, commissioners, volunteers, and other NCA CASI representatives shall avoid any conflict or appearance of conflict between personal interests and the interests of the Commission. (For a full text of the **Conflict of Interest** policy, please see the *Committees of the Commission Handbook*.)

Definition of a Unit School. A unit school provides a sequence of organized learning experiences for children encompassing grades kindergarten through twelve. Under special circumstances, a school with a grade organization continuing through grade 9, 10, or 11 but not through grade 12 may be considered a unit school at the discretion of the state committee. The school shall have a common identity for all grades (as determined by the state committee) and shall be so organized as to operate as a single entity. The organizational structure of the school is determined by the district to best facilitate the educational development of its students.

Organizational Structure. The organizational structure established by the school district will determine the particular policies and criteria under which the individual school is eligible for accreditation, provided this is in accord with whatever state classification of school level exists.

Affiliate Status. Affiliate status is a commitment to quality education contracted between a district and the Commission. The district, in a written agreement with the state committee promises to 1) bring all schools into accredited status within a given period (not to exceed 3 years) if all of the schools are not currently accredited. 2) coordinate the improvement activities of all of the schools. Districts need only seek Affiliate Status if they wish to pursue the dues structure affiliate districts. Affiliate status currently affects only elementary and middle school fees.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Although most of the terms in the present document will appear familiar to professional educators, in many cases a slightly more specific meaning has been utilized. This glossary should clarify for the reader those nuances of meaning.

Accreditation. Recognition granted by the NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement verifying that the school/district has met NCA CASI's specific membership and school improvement criteria.

Action Plan. A plan that identifies how and when the school improvement plan will be implemented. It identifies the goals, support data, assessments, interventions, research, staff development, resources, timeline, and persons responsible for implementing the interventions and assessments contained in the school improvement plan.

Affective Goals. School improvement goals that address those understandings, competencies, habits, or attitudes most directly related to the emotional and psychological attributes of students.

Annual Report. An annual report completed by schools (usually via the internet) that updates their compliance with NCA CASI's membership and improvement criteria.

Articulation, Horizontal. Communication, policy development, curricular design, instructional coordination, assessment, and/or other coordination within a grade level and/or subject areas.

Articulation, Vertical. Cooperative planning and communication between schools, grade levels, or subject areas which address policy development, curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment.

Assessment. In an NCA CASI school improvement plan, assessments are instruments used to collect data about and evaluate student performance. Each assessment must be aligned with at least one of the student performance goals in the improvement plan. The quality of assessments is described using the terms "reliable," "valid," and "fair."

Assessment System. A management system containing a set of assessments that is designed to collect and evaluate data about student performance.

Baseline Student Performance. The status of student achievement at the point in time from which improvement will be tracked.

Climate, Community. The climate of the community is the prevailing opinions, attitudes, and conditions in a school community pertaining to the improvement of the school educational program.

Climate, School. The climate of the school is the prevailing opinions, attitudes, and conditions in the school pertaining to the total school program and its improvement. Aspects such as learning conditions, safety, the academic press, and any extra-classroom conditions

affecting students or faculty morale may be viewed as components of the general condition called “climate.”

Cognitive Goals. Goals most directly related to the intellectual attributes of students.

Credentialing. A decision about the preparedness of a student to be successful based upon meeting the performance standard in *Transitions* credentialing areas.

Criteria. Those principles, statements, or guideposts used in evaluating something. Membership and improvement criteria for NCA CASI are organized into categories which include Process of Schooling; Information System; School Improvement Plan; Vision, Leadership, Governance, and School Community; and Resource Allocation.

Documentation Report. A written report that documents the results of implementing the school improvement plan.

Educational Program. The entire set of planned and incidental experiences that students may experience in the school.

Employability Skills. A credentialing area in *Transitions*. Employability skills are skills that employees need to be successful in their employment.

Endorsement (School Improvement Endorsement, Outcomes Endorsement, and *Transitions* Endorsement). Endorsement is the recognition that has been given to schools that have successfully completed a school improvement cycle. NCA CASI has had a “School Improvement Endorsement” (SI), an “Outcomes Endorsement” (OE), and a *Transitions* Endorsement (TE). NCA CASI has created a school improvement framework called “Performance Accreditation” and is phasing out endorsements. Schools that completed their improvement cycle during the 2000-2001 school year will begin implementing Performance Accreditation in the 2001-2002 school year. All other schools will complete the endorsement they started and will implement Performance Accreditation in their next improvement cycle.

Effect Size/Statistical Significance. Effect size tells the magnitude of growth and is therefore helpful in the school improvement process to show program improvement. Statistical significance tells us the probability that the change would be what it is. Statistical significance does NOT tell the magnitude of improvement and is therefore NOT as helpful in the school improvement process.

Essence of a Goal. The essence of a goal is the conceptual basis of the goal. When two people are talking about a student performance goal, it is often assumed that the two people have the same meaning for that goal. However, often we use the same term and have very different meanings. For example, when schools select a goal related to “citizenship” there is potential for confusion. Does citizenship mean compliance with rules or adult authority? Does it mean service to others? Does it mean participation in representative governance? Since the concept may embody several facets, each of which would require a set of interventions and assessments different from the other facets, it is important that staffs discuss what they intend when they use the term. They need to come to consensus on what the focus will be. The NCA CASI Expert Database contains samples of goal essence for over 50 goal areas. The NCA CASI Expert Database can be found on the Commission website at <http://www.ncacasi.org/> Finding the essence of school improvement goals for your school can be very helpful in aligning assessments and interventions with the goal and in implementing the action plan.

Expert Database. The Expert Database can be found on the Commission website at <http://www.ncacasi.org/>. It contains essences of goals, possible assessments for those goals, and possible interventions for those goals. It is currently being updated.

Goal/Student Performance Goal. Student goals are (1) knowledge, (2) skills at applying knowledge to a variety of contexts, (3) habits or patterns of behavior, or (4) attitudes, perception, beliefs, or opinions that are to be developed within students. NCA CASI has identified specific ways in which goals should be written and those guidelines are contained in NCA CASI's Team Chair Software. All of the goals in the NCA CASI school improvement plan are student performance goals.

Host School. The school hosting a peer review team visit as a result of its cumulative work in developing an action plan for improving student performance.

Improvement Criteria. Requirements that a school must meet in order to sustain its membership in NCA CASI.

Individual Student Intervention Plan. A specific plan designed to meet the needs of an individual student who has not yet met the performance standard in a *Transitions* credentialing area.

Information System. The information system is a formal system for collecting, organizing, managing, retrieving, distributing, and analyzing data. The system converts data into information that is usable by others.

Intervention/Strategy/Activities. An intervention is something that is done to or with students to develop something specific with those students. One might have a strategy to move to block scheduling, but what teachers do with students within the block of time is the intervention. It is the interventions that actually take place with students that will affect student performance.

Membership Criteria. Requirements a school must meet to be admitted to membership as an NCA CASI school.

Mission. The mission is a statement that identifies the priorities/educational beliefs of the school/district with regard to what is to be developed within its students.

Multiple Assessments. Currently, NCA CASI requires schools to use multiple assessments to determine progress on each student performance goal.

NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. The North Central Association has two Commissions. The Commission on Higher Learning serves universities and the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement serves pre-kindergarten – twelfth grade and special school populations. Member schools voluntarily join NCA CASI.

NCA CASI Software. NCA CASI has developed three pieces of stand alone software. *The School Leaders and Team Chair* Software provides a toolkit for peer review and steering chairpersons. *Profile* Software assists a school in constructing a school profile. *Data Analysis* Software provides a database for maintaining student performance data; it assists in

determining the magnitude of growth or improvement; and it assists in the formulation of a documentation report. The site license allows schools to place the software on any and all computers within the member school. All three pieces of software are provided to member schools only and should be removed from all school computers if the school discontinues NCA CASI membership.

Peer Review Chairperson/Team. A peer review team is comprised of educators who assist the school in designing and implementing the NCA CASI school improvement plan. The chairperson and team members are volunteers from schools outside the host school's district. The chairperson helps the member school through the entire improvement cycle, and the chairperson coordinates the efforts of the peer review team. Team members and chairpersons are selected based upon the specific expertise needed by the school and their knowledge of the NCA CASI Protocol and Performance Accreditation Framework.

Performance Accreditation. Performance accreditation is a rigorous school improvement framework based on the school's ability to demonstrate that student performance is improving. In Performance Accreditation, schools are expected to move toward the NCA CASI standard of increasing the proportion of students who are prepared to be successful at the next transition.

Performance Standard. A performance standard is a specific level of achievement on an assessment or set of assessments. In *Transitions* schools, students must meet the performance standards in order to be credentialed.

Phases. The NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework can be organized into eight distinct phases. These phases are explained in detail in the monograph entitled, *Implementing the School Improvement Process*, that was sent to every NCA CASI member school in the fall of 2000. The monograph can be downloaded at no cost from the Commission website (<http://www.ncacasi.org>) by NCA CASI member schools.

Profile/School Profile. A school profile is a 15-25 page document that contains data about the school. The data in the profile helps to guide the design of the key components of the school improvement plan including: goal clarification, selection of assessments for each goal, identification of possible interventions, and the need for specific support elements to be included in the action plan.

Protocol/ NCA CASI Protocol. A set of procedures and processes that are standard for all NCA CASI schools. The Protocol establishes a school improvement cycle of five years and requires that schools host two peer review team visits during the cycle. Additional details of the Protocol can be found in the NCA CASI handbook entitled *Implementing the School Improvement Process* that can be downloaded at no cost from the Commission website (<http://www.ncacasi.org>) by NCA CASI member schools.

Psychomotor Skills. Those capabilities and competencies pertaining to the motor (physical) attributes of students.

Resources. Resources include all the human, financial, material, and technological means of support for the school program and the school's program of improvement.

School Community. The school community is comprised of all persons within the school and all persons in the attendance area of the school, as well as the geographical and physical environments. For selected considerations, “school community” may be considered to include some contiguous portions of the larger society, as appropriate.

School Improvement Cycle/Five-Year Cycle/Cycle. The NCA CASI Performance Accreditation Framework and its Protocol are designed for a five-year implementation cycle from start through the documentation of improvement.

School Improvement Plan. A school improvement plan includes an identification of the student performance goals, the assessments that are aligned with each of the goals, the interventions that are aligned with each of those goals, and an implementation plan.

Standard Unit/Standard Score. Standard units/standard scores identify how far a specific score is from the mean score using standard deviations for the unit of measure, hence the term “standard unit.” Two scores can often be contrasted by placing both of them on the same normal curve and then finding the distance between them in standard units. The NCA CASI software will convert certain student performance scores to standard scores, find the standard score difference, and interpret that difference, for NCA CASI purposes, automatically.

Steering Committee. A representative group of people from the school and community that provides leadership and direction to the school improvement process. Each steering committee has a chairperson assigned to coordinate the activities of the committee. The committee ensures that all components of the NCA CASI process are addressed and that the tasks are completed in a timely fashion.

Student Performance Goal. A school improvement goal that addresses the skills, knowledge, habits, attitudes, and behaviors that we wish to improve in students.

Transitions. *Transitions* is the exemplary stage of Performance Accreditation. *Transitions* is a school improvement model that focuses on each student demonstrating success in skills required at the next level of schooling or life transition. In *Transitions*, individual student performance data are monitored and intervention plans are constructed for students who are not successful in specified learning areas. More information about *Transitions* can be found on the NCA CASI website at <http://www.ncacasi.org/>.

Transitions Declaration. In *Transitions* schools, a statement that an individual student has achieved pre-determined skill levels in a credentialing area.

Vision. A vision document describes in detail the components and characteristics of the schools that would be required to fulfill a specific mission. A vision statement is a clear description of the kind of system that will be needed to deliver the mission of the organization.