



Independent Accreditation Update, Important Upcoming Events, & More!

Mission Based Evaluation

During April of 2014, Peoria Christian School, a small nonpublic school in rural Iowa with 52 students had the privilege to pursue independent accreditation via Christian Schools International (CSI). In the past we have been required to accredit ourselves through the state. This process with the state was very time consuming and really didn't evaluate our school based on our mission statement.

Peoria Christian School's mission statement is to nurture each child's unique potential as an image bearer of God, develop the student's capacity for the enjoyment of the created world, and to educate the total person. During the months leading up to our third party site visit, we were required to evaluate our entire school's program from nuts to bolts. Through this process we evaluated ourselves on how well we fulfilled our mission. Did we nurture each child's unique potential as an image bearer of God? Did we develop the student's capacity for the enjoyment of the CREATED world? Did we educate the whole child?

Throughout this entire process of accreditation the theme of the visit was how does your curriculum, your standards, your teaching strategies, and everything we do fulfill our mission? What a joy it was to be evaluated on how well we provide personalized learning to develop a Christ-centered worldview for the glory of God alone. This is the vision of Peoria Christian School, and in the past our site visits didn't evaluate our mission or vision. We were evaluated on items that were hot topics in education during the

period of our site visit. Did we include a particular policy? Do we protect certain classes of people, etc.?

As a K-8 school of 52 students using combined classrooms to educate students, we need to be evaluated differently than schools with 52 students in a grade level. Not only do we need to be evaluated differently, but also we need to be held to a rigorous standard of practice. This site visit was extremely rigorous and thorough, looking at all facets of our educational system. Not only did they do this, but also they held a community meeting to get an idea of the climate of our community, parents, volunteers, staff, and board. As a small Christian school, we were very blessed to have this opportunity to use third party accreditation and we pray that it has the opportunity to remain in the State of Iowa.

Craig Rapinchuk
Principal, Peoria Christian School

Reporting Status To IA. Dept. of Ed.

There have been questions about the options in a letter that recently went out from the IA Dept. of Ed. [More info on our website](#). Please call us with questions! The options are as follows:

- Option 1 - Choose to stay state board accredited. (May also be independently accredited as before)
- Option 2 - State board accredited school choosing to switch to independent accreditation.
- Option 3 - Schools not state accredited that are becoming independently accredited and want to be recognized as accredited with the state. You'll be assigned a building number and will be required to submit certain web-based forms as mentioned in the letter.

Mark Your Calendars For Our Annual Meeting!

We are actively planning for our annual meeting! **Please save the date: November 19th!** We are tentatively planning on 8:45AM to 1:00PM and are working on some great break-out sessions, a guest speaker, and a new location we'll be announcing very soon! We are also inviting representatives from each of our accrediting agencies to be there.

Iowa ACE "Education Celebration" Event

This year, the [Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education \(Iowa ACE\)](#) and its sister organization, Iowa Advocates For Choice in Education, have set very ambitious goals for attendance for this year's Education Celebration event on **Tuesday, March 3rd at the Iowa State Capitol! Would you be willing to make sure your school is represented at this critical event?**

With the school choice coalition's push to raise the cap on tax credits, reintroduce ESA legislation, and educate the Iowa Legislature about school choice; we need all hands on deck to demonstrate grassroots support!

Please take the time to plan on a group of students (or your entire school!) coming to the event. You can participate in our rally, learn about lobbying efforts for your school, plan a tour of the Capitol, and leverage the day to provide a great learning opportunity for your students!

Please contact Trish Wilger at [Iowa ACE](#) for more information! They have a shiny new website, too, you might want to check out!

IACS Website Upgrade!

We have had a new website now for a while and it has been met with great reviews. We aren't resting on our laurels, however.

We will be announcing some new website features for dues-paying members in November. Stay tuned! In the meantime, please email us with requests on ways our website or IACS in general can better serve your school!

Iowa's School Choice PAC Needs Your Help!

Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education is gearing up for a busy election cycle. Although both organizations are 501(C)4s, IACS does not endorse candidates, make campaign donations, or get involved in political races. We exist to educate Iowans about Christian education in the State and advocate for you at the Capitol. We do, however, support the efforts of the Iowa Educational Opportunities PAC (a separate fund under Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education) to champion the school choice cause.

Please visit their website and consider helping them with your financial gift or to help with fundraising. Both [Iowa Advocates](#) and its [PAC](#) could use your help. You can also find their links on our website's "[Partners](#)" page.

IACS Dues Letters Going Out Next Month!

IACS can only educate Iowans and advocate for you if your school participates as members of IACS.

Please be on the lookout for the letter coming next month that offers the best bang for your buck you'll invest all year! If you have any questions about where your dues go or what our plans are for the upcoming year, please don't hesitate to call us!

We'd also be happy to come speak to your school, staff, board, parent group, or other event about IACS, school choice, legislative issues, ESAs, or any other topic. When our schedule allows, we also are happy to send a representative to discuss civics, state

government, and faith in politics with your students in the classroom.

ESA Numbers: The Real Story

We posted this article in our last newsletter but thought it was worth repeating: There are many who are coming up with some wild numbers on how much ESAs will cost and what its impact will be. We want to clarify the context of those numbers so that, moving forward, you are armed with the facts when talking about ESAs and how they would benefit Iowa families.

Some estimate ESAs could cost \$207 million. Although theoretically possible, similar programs implemented in other states demonstrate clearly that not every private school family and a relatively small percentage of public school families will utilize the program, putting the realistic annual cost of the program at a level that is less than last year's ed reform bill on an annual basis and much less than many of the numbers discussed for "allowable growth" in public school budgets each year.

Some claim ESAs would divert money from public schools. There is no mechanism in the bill to divert money from public schools. Public schools will still receive local property taxes, their local option sales tax, and other State revenues regardless of where children attend school. We have not seen any choice program result in negative consequences for public school budgets or (more importantly) student achievement.

The ESA concept is cost effective, true ed reform that respects the role of parents. It is a fraction of the cost public K-12 schools receive (currently over 50% of an ever-growing State budget) and will demonstrably increase student achievement for both public and private school students.

IACS Online

Check out our **NEW** website! You can keep track of IACS' efforts at www.iowachristianschools.org. Learn more about IACS and sign up to receive email updates and alerts. If your school is not listed or needs updating, please let us know.

“Follow” IACS on [Twitter](#).

“Like” us on [Facebook](#).

“Follow” us on [Google+](#).

IACS Membership

Your school should have received this year's request for dues. We appreciate those that have already responded, **thank you!** We can't effectively represent the interests of your school at the capitol without your school's participation! **We need your help to protect the rights of Christian schools in Iowa.**

As an example of the value of IACS membership: every year IACS defeats numerous unfunded mandates at the Iowa Capitol. Just *one* of these mandates would cost your school significantly more than its IACS dues for the year! Add to this significant victories on accreditation and school choice issues and IACS membership is a great value. Join us as we work for you. Contact Brad Vis at (712) 476-2615 for information.



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