



Council on Accreditation and School Improvement  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033

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## **Benefits of Accreditation**

Council on Accreditation and School Improvement  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (commonly referred to as SACS CASI) is a non-governmental, voluntary organization that accredits more than 13,000 public and nonpublic institutions from early childhood through university. Since its beginning, the mission of SACS CASI has been to help schools improve student learning. Today, SACS CASI is the largest accrediting agency in the world and is one of only six agencies that accredit both public and nonpublic educational institutions. A SACS CASI accredited school is part of an international educational network, the members of which have demonstrated success in educating students. Today, SACS CASI accreditation is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of quality in education.

In a world in which schools are being held increasingly accountable for the quality of their efforts, SACS CASI accreditation is a readily available and effective vehicle for schools to demonstrate their effectiveness to stakeholders and society at large. An accredited school is one that has demonstrated its commitment to meeting a set of research-based standards; to engaging in a program of continuous school improvement; and to providing for quality assurance through self-evaluation and peer review. SACS CASI accreditation provides a school access to a network of services and technical assistance that helps a school establish and attain its goals for improving student performance and the teaching and learning process.

To earn accreditation, a school must meet SACS CASI quality standards; implement a school improvement plan that focuses on increasing student performance; and be regularly evaluated by



an outside group of professional educators. Accreditation is voluntary and must be renewed each year.

## Benefits to Schools

Accreditation provides schools at all levels with a proven process for raising student achievement. SACS CASI accredited schools have access to multiple resources (publications, manuals, software, professional development, and conferences) designed to support and facilitate school improvement. Accreditation helps ensure that schools have access to the resources necessary for translating their vision into reality.

In addition, educators gain access to a network of approximately 13,000 schools, including over 100 American-International schools abroad, for the sharing of best practices and professional knowledge. Educators also gain valuable information about effective practices in other schools by serving on Quality Assurance Review teams. Through participation in the accreditation process and use of the resources available from SACS CASI, educators improve their ability to analyze and use data to make sound educational decisions. Finally, accreditation provides educational leaders at all levels with deserved recognition for going above and beyond the minimum to demonstrate their continuous commitment to quality and the success of all students.

## Benefits to Students

### *Increased Performance*

SACS CASI accreditation is a proven method for improving the performance of all students. Several recent studies of schools actively engaged in school improvement through accreditation revealed that verifiable gains in student achievement occurred in a significant majority of the schools.

### *Transfer of Credits or Grade Placement*

In addition to raising student achievement, accreditation eases the transfer of students from one accredited school to another. Regional accreditation allows a receiving school in the same or

another state to determine the quality of a sending school and accept the incoming student's credits, grade placement, and academic record without further assessment or validation. Easy student transfer between accredited schools throughout the nation is possible because of the reciprocal agreements between the six regional accrediting agencies. Finally, accreditation benefits students as they move from one level of schooling to another within their own district because it helps ensure that they are properly prepared for the next level of schooling.

### *Access to Programs and Scholarships*

Accreditation benefits students who participate in specific sports programs; apply for federal and state grants and scholarships; or seek admission to military programs, colleges and other post-secondary institutions that require students to come from regionally accredited schools.

### **Benefits to Parents, Business Community, and General Public**

Accreditation assures parents, the business community, and the public that the school is committed to raising student achievement, providing a safe and enriching learning environment, and maintaining an efficient and effective operation. It is well known that parents and businesses consider the quality of the local schools when making decisions about where to locate and that they view accreditation as one of the significant indicators of quality. Regional accreditation assures parents, businesses, and the public that an accredited school adheres to standards that are based on successful professional practice and the latest educational research, and that the school is continuously trying to become even more effective.

### **Benefits to School Districts**

Accreditation offers school districts a process that supports systemic planning, focuses on student learning, and provides a vehicle for meeting accountability requirements. Accreditation supports and enhances a common language of school improvement across content areas and grade levels, as well as across individual schools, feeder schools, and school districts.

School districts that engage all of its schools in the accreditation process realize a systemic benefit from such a commitment. Quality elementary and middle schools help ensure quality



secondary schools. When all schools in a district are accredited there is a commitment to quality education for all students.

Accreditation ensures continuity and collaboration in planning for improvement because each school's improvement goals must complement those of the district. Accreditation recognizes and validates the improvement efforts of the school, school district, and community and generates recommendations for further improvement.

### Benefits to School Boards

SACS CASI accreditation focuses all schools on improving student performance and, most important, provides a proven resource to use in raising student achievement. Accreditation also provides school boards with independent, non-governmental validation that the schools they oversee are effectively using public funds to deliver quality education to their students. In addition, SACS CASI accreditation is a cost-effective way for all schools in a district to engage in a coherent school improvement process and align local, state, and federal requirements.