



## **THIS IS AN ACCREDITED SCHOOL**

### **A Message for Parents and the Community**

#### **What is Regional Accreditation?**

Regional accreditation means membership in one of the six regional, nationally recognized associations which accredit schools in the 50 states and in many countries. These associations are governed by officers selected from among member schools and school districts.

#### **What is Accreditation?**

Accreditation is recognition of a high-quality and well-balanced educational program. Accreditation serves as the catalyst for school improvement. It generally helps to upgrade the quality of instruction and the school's program of study. Accredited schools meet Northwest Association of Accredited Schools' (NAAS) accreditation standards considered essential for quality education.

#### **How did my School Become Accredited?**

Accreditation is a four step process. It requires that schools renew themselves every six years by conducting a self-study, hosting a peer evaluation team to review and validate the self-study; completing a school improvement plan and engaging in continual school improvement. The process usually includes the completion of an Annual Report or other approved approaches to validating compliance with the standards.

#### **Is Regional Accreditation New?**

The Northwest Association was founded in 1917 and has grown to over 1800 member schools in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. NAAS also accredits schools internationally and is the primary association for accrediting distance education and travel study schools.

#### **What is the Value of Accreditation for this School?**

One over-riding value of accreditation is the promotion of continuous school improvement which leads to greater student achievement. In addition, it affirms that objective conditions for quality and progress exist in the school. Accreditation attests to the potential for excellence and provides a method for the school to show how it meets approved regional accreditation standards and thereby stands as a beacon in the community.

#### **To the Public:**

- Regional accreditation assures transferability of credits among other regionally accredited schools.
- Citizens are assured of accountability and value for their tax dollars in light of the fact that their school is meeting regional standards.
- The community in general is more attractive to prospective incoming families and businesses when it can be reported that its schools are accredited.
- Accreditation assures the public that an ongoing process of evaluation will be a permanent feature of school improvement practices.
- Through local school boards, the public can receive information regularly on the extent to which their school is meeting standards.
- Accreditation provides general justification for public confidence in a member school. It does not affirm that the school is perfect in all aspects, but it does promise that the school has the resources, leadership, and vitality needed for ongoing improvement.

- Accreditation gives evidence to its public that the school is meeting expectations and fulfilling standards that in many cases transcend local and state requirements. Accreditation assures that colleges and universities will accept student credits.

### **To the School:**

- Accreditation leads to the improvement of the school through its own efforts. To meet and exceed NAAS standards requires total school involvement and a serious commitment to educational renewal.
- Accreditation demands that the school undertake a periodic evaluation which is a stimulus for growth, improvement and directed change.
- Accreditation permits the school to be an active participant in the shaping of American education because the standards set by the association usually forecasts the direction schools will take in the future.
- Accreditation provides a school with a means of demonstrating accountability. It indicates that the school is judiciously utilizing the resources at its command.
- Parents know that staff development and instruction will relate to the school's mission and beliefs.
- Officials of schools and school districts can draw on a large reservoir of professional help to continually monitor and improve the education they provide students.
- The feed back from the state accreditation committee gives schools additional ideas and the opportunity to share ideas among school leaders.

### **To the Teachers:**

- Teachers are assured that a comprehensive program of basic education is being offered.
- Teachers are assured that their colleagues are qualified in professional and subject matter areas.
- Faculty members know that instructional teaching conditions meet NAAS standards and continuous efforts are made to make these conditions even better.
- Teachers know that the instructional program is designed to meet the needs of students and supports the school's mission and beliefs.
- Teachers are involved periodically in a comprehensive evaluation of the school's program and in designing a plan for school improvement.
- Teachers are guaranteed a significant voice in conducting self-studies and evaluations of the school.

### **What are the Accreditation Standards?**

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

1. Mission, Beliefs, and Expectations for Student Learning
2. Curriculum
3. Instruction
4. Assessment

#### SUPPORT STANDARDS

5. Leadership and Organization

#### 6. School Services

- Student Support Services
- Guidance Services
- Health Services
- Library Information Services
- Special Education Services
- Family and Community Services

#### 7. Facilities and Finance

#### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

8. Culture of Continual Improvement

## **NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS**

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### ***Why Become Accredited?***

- Accredited schools are members of one of the nation's six regional accreditation associations.
- Accredited schools must meet rigorous standards and report progress on an annual basis.
- Accreditation promotes self-regulation by requiring schools to participate in an ongoing school improvement process.
- Accredited schools assure the public the accountability for their tax dollars.
- Regional accreditation provides a vehicle to meet state accountability laws and NCLB
- Regional accreditation protocols help schools collect and analyze the same data that is needed for these state and federal laws
- Regional accreditation external reviews help schools stay on track and focused on improving student performance
- Regional accreditation helps schools use multiple measures to gauge student progress
- Accreditation provides self-regulation
- Regional Accreditation provides the structure and tools to align multiple assessments with curriculum and staff development
- The regional accreditation process is teacher driven
- Regional accreditation is the education profession's method of self-evaluation and quality assurance
- Accreditation is bottom up instead of top down
- Regional accreditation adds value within a local community as its schools are recognized for meeting high standards
- It's simple really; state and federal laws tell schools what while NAAS shows schools how

***Procedures for membership:***

- Schools must be licensed and recognized by the legally constituted educational agency in the state or government in which they are located.
- Schools submit an application approved by the governing board.
- Schools must submit a completed Standards and Annual Report form by October 15 of each year.
- Schools submit certification that the school has completed an approved self-evaluation within the first three years. This is repeated every six years.
- Schools are rated annually according to approved, approved with comment, advised, warned or dropped

***NAAS Provides:***

- Experienced leadership
- NAAS central web Site
- Links to our seven state web sites
- State advisory committees
- Outside team visits
- Training for team chairs and team members
- Resources
- Opportunities for participation
- Conferences
- Climate profile software
- Accreditation certificates
- Embossing stamps for diplomas

From a self-study ... “We have learned to share our work with our community, and that has reaped us rich dividends. Without this accreditation process, we might have failed to articulate that which is most important to us and to understand the significance of using student performance data to correct instruction midcourse, which would have delayed, if not deterred, our progress in improving student achievement.”



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