MEMORANDUM
TO: Indiana State Board of Education
FROM: Office of School Accountability, Indiana Department of Education
RE: Third-Party Recognition Petition for Christian Schools International (CSI-Provisional Accreditation)
DATE: February 5, 2025

This memorandum summarizes the information provided by Christian Schools International (CSI) in its petition and provides the Department's thoughts and final recommendation regarding recognition of CSI as a third-party accrediting organization with its new Provisional Accreditation protocol.

Background & Organization Overview

Mission and Objectives: Christian Schools International began operations in 1920 and accredited its first school in 1998. CSI provides schools with strategic consultation, leadership development, accreditation, employee benefits services, and Bible curricula. Its mission is to support schools "in their task of teaching students to know God and his world, and to glorify him through service to others." (*Third-Party Accrediting Organization Petition, Christian Schools International, CSI Overview*, page 1).

CSI is approved as a recognized third-party accrediting organization in Indiana under its current accrediting protocol. The Provisional Accreditation protocol was recently developed by CSI to enable schools a new pathway to obtain accreditation.

When appropriate and as approved by CSI, a school may be considered for provisional accreditation status during its candidacy stage. Schools approved for provisional accreditation status must meet specific identified quality assurances established by CSI. (*CSI Accreditation Application Provision of Evidence (Part II)*).

Member Schools: Currently, CSI has six accredited schools in Indiana. Three additional schools have expressed interest in obtaining Provisional Accreditation.

Agency Personnel:
CSI's agency personnel consist of Director of Accreditation (CSI employee), Manager of Accreditation Support (CSI Employee), six Accreditation Regional Coordinators (Independent Contractor) and a CSI Accreditation Commissioner (Volunteer). Commissioners must be a head

of school, faculty member, or retiree from an accredited CSI school who has some level of experience in the Christian Schools International accreditation process.

Members of the CSI Board of Trustees are elected by the CSI membership each year by ballot. Board members are required to meet requirements to be elected to the Board of Trustees and may serve for a maximum of three consecutive three-year terms. The Board of Trustees takes its role seriously and understands the trust placed in its care by the CSI membership. It aims to advance the mission of CSI to support schools in their task of teaching students to know God and his world, and to glorify him through service to others. (https://csionline.org/csi-board-of- trustees/)

Accreditation Process and Procedures

Review and Approval Process:
A school may be considered for provisional accreditation during its candidacy stage. The school must host an assigned CSI representative on campus for a preliminary accreditation site visit. If granted provisional accreditation status, a school must complete all quality assurance (*Measuring the Mission)* accreditation tasks, including the completion of a Self-Study and hosting a full accreditation site visit within three years. An annual school visit by a CSI representative, either virtually or in person, may also be required for schools while in provisional status. If at any point during the provisional accreditation process, the school fails to comply with the requirements of CSI's identified quality assurances, visits, and/or scheduled deadlines, the school will return solely to the status of an accreditation candidate.

Expectations and Requirements for Approval:
Schools approved for provisional accreditation status must meet specific identified quality assurances established by CSI. *(CSI Accreditation Application Provision of Evidence (Part II) and Provisional RC Checklist Indiana (2024-2025)).*

- The school must first complete all learning modules required for accreditation. Examples of modules and tasks associated with the modules are incorporating as a 501(c)(3) organization and creating a curriculum (*CSI Accreditation Provisional Status Overview page 2*). The module process typically requires anywhere from three months to a year or more depending on what a school has in place when it first applies for provisional accreditation. (*CSI Provisional Accreditation Supplement page 1*).

- The school must host an assigned Christian Schools International representative on campus for a preliminary accreditation site visit within the first eight weeks of school.
- If granted provisional accreditation, within three years, a school must complete all Measuring the Mission accreditation tasks, including the completion of a Self-Study and hosting a full accreditation site visit.
- An annual school visit by a Christian Schools International representative, either virtually or in person, will also be required for schools while in provisional status.
- The candidate school establishes a School Improvement Team composed of appropriate, knowledgeable stakeholders of the school.
- The Regional Coordinator trains the School Improvement Team, virtually or in person, to prepare the candidate school for the upcoming required tasks of the accreditation process.
- Prior to the Commission meeting, Christian Schools International Accreditation will assign a minimum of two accreditation report readers to review the School Improvement Plan of each school.
- Through the use of specified Christian Schools International accreditation report forms, readers will make recommendations to the Christian Schools International Accreditation Commission for or against initial or renewed accreditation for each school.

Assistance, Monitoring and Communication:

The primary contact for a CSI Accredited school is their Accreditation Regional Coordinator. Accreditation Regional Coordinators communicate with each of their assigned schools a minimum of quarterly and submit monthly reports to the CSI director of accreditation outlining their communications with their schools. Communication during the time a school is working through their Self-Study and leading up to a site visit is much more frequent.

CSI Accreditation uses Jetpack as their accreditation management program. All applications, state addendum requirements, and annual reporting documentation are stored and tracked through Jetpack. Jetpack is maintained and technical assistance is available through CSI Accreditation staff members and the host company, Virtual Atlantic.

A committee convened by Christian Schools International Accreditation and the accreditation department staff will review all annual reporting documents and make a recommendation regarding continued accreditation to the CSI Accreditation Commission. Schools whose annual

reports are not accepted will be notified of the reason for denial and how to rectify the situation. (*CSI-2024 Third Party Accrediting Organization Petition, page 16)*.

Accreditation Standards

Standards and Expectations:

According to *Measuring the Mission 2022 Procedures and Standards,* the schools must meet all CSI Standards for Mission and School Improvement, Governance, Fiscal Responsibilities, Staffing, and Student Health and Safety Indicators. In addition, evidence of meeting all state-specific requirements for nonpublic schools and the Choice Scholarship is also required. The membership and provisional accreditation approval and provisional visit typically take place anywhere between one to three months depending on how many times CSI may need to request further information, explanation, or evidence from a school to determine that they have met all membership, state-specific, and provisional requirements.

The school is required to complete a full self-study within three years of receiving its provisional accreditation status. Most provisionally accredited schools complete the self-study requirement within one to two years just as a typical accreditation candidate school would do. A school applying for accreditation candidacy (*not* candidacy with provisional accreditation status) would be approved as an accreditation candidate within a month of applying as the candidacy process is much less rigorous. At that point, the school may have up to three years to complete the self-study process and to host a site visit. Most candidates complete the process in one to two years. (*CSI-2024 Third Party Accrediting Organization Petition, page 9)*.

Evaluation Process:

After gaining candidacy with provisional accreditation status, schools have 3 years to complete the full accreditation process with CSI. This process includes an intensive self-study, the establishment of a school improvement plan, and the hosting of a successful on-campus accreditation site visit. *(CSI Accreditation Provisional Status Overview, page 2).*

To maintain accreditation, Annual Reporting, which requires evidence and narrative demonstrating continued progress on School Improvement Plan goals, must be submitted to Christian Schools International Accreditation each spring for the duration of the school's five-year accreditation cycle. The full self-study process and on-site team visit will take place

every five years for accreditation cycle renewal. (*CSI-2024 Third Party Accrediting Organization Petition, page 17)*.

If accreditation is denied during the accreditation process, the school will be informed in writing of the reason. The school may appeal this decision if they choose. The Christian Schools International Accreditation Commission is the highest and final level of appeal.

Signed Recognition Agreement

CSI provided a copy of the signed recognition agreement as well as assurances that the schools that earn Provisional Accreditation will meet the required Indiana legal standards and will comply with the Indiana Academic Standards.

Department Recommendation

CSI's Provisional Accreditation utilizes a well-thought-out and organized process while giving schools the opportunity to achieve accreditation using a new pathway. Provisional Accreditation provides resources to the schools to assist in their advancement. The Department recommends approval of CSI's Provisional Accreditation as a third-party accrediting body in Indiana.