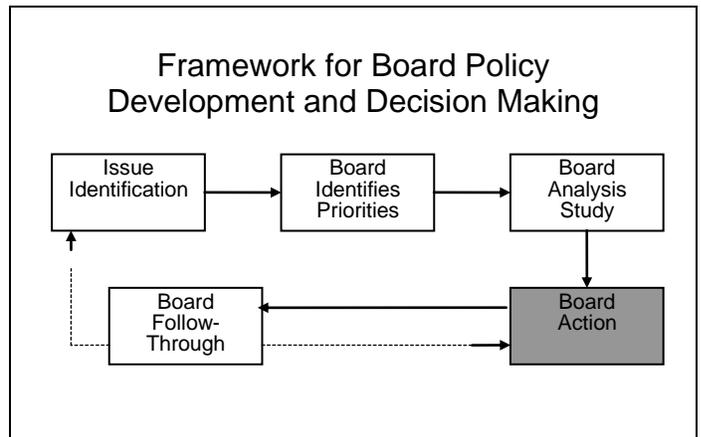


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

January 14, 2010



Agenda Item: Request for Specially Accredited Status Pella Christian High School (Code 63-5166-8302)

Iowa Goal: All K-12 students will achieve at a high level.

Equity Impact Statement

281 Iowa Administrative Code 12.5(8) requires that each school and school district incorporate multicultural and gender fair goals for the educational program into its comprehensive school improvement plan.

Presenter: None (Consent agenda)

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board approve the request to grant Specially Accredited status to Pella Christian High School (Pella, IA) grades 9-12.

Background: Iowa Code section 256.11(13) authorizes the State Board of Education to grant Specially Accredited status to private high schools or combined junior-senior high schools operated for the express purpose of preparing students for college. In order to qualify for this status, schools must provide annual proof that:

- At least 80 percent of those graduating from the school for each of the last four years have been accepted by accredited four-year or equivalent liberal arts, scientific, or technological colleges or universities.

- The school provides at least the minimum courses to be offered and taught required by Iowa Code section 256.11, including six units of English/ language arts, four units of a sequential program in mathematics and two additional units of mathematics, five units of science, five units of social studies, and four sequential units of foreign language.

In addition, the school must provide:

- A count of student enrollment, by grade level.
- Certification that the school facility is in compliance with the fire code.
- Certification that licensed staff has received pre-service physicals.

There are currently eight schools on the specially accredited list of college preparatory schools in Iowa. These schools are eligible for textbook and transportation funds. However, these schools are not held to the same level of accountability as are fully accredited schools. Per statute, they are not required to file an Annual Progress Report with their constituents or with the Iowa Department of Education (Department), nor do they prepare a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). The CSIP is another document that demonstrates to the public and the Department the school, parental, and community involvement in assessing educational needs, and establishes local education standards and student achievement levels, and, as applicable, the consolidation of federal and state planning, goal-setting, and reporting requirements.



Pella Christian High School

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November 30, 2009

Del Hoover, Deputy Division Administrator
Division of PK-12
Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

RECEIVED

DEC 07 2009

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Hoover,

Pella Christian High School requests to be recognized by the Iowa Department of Education as a specially accredited non-public school per Iowa Code 256.11 (13) based on current law, still on the books. This request comes from board action at our November 23, 2009 board meeting (see enclosure) regarding our school's accreditation.

After consulting with the eight current specially accredited schools we are convinced that the current standards for College Preparatory Accreditation are producing some of the best outcomes in the state of Iowa. The legislature's foresight led to an accreditation program that allows our schools to innovate, to be flexible, and produce outcomes that meet or exceed current achievement goals.

Pella Christian High School currently meets or exceeds all of the necessary requirements of this type of accreditation and believes that at this time, special accreditation allows us the best opportunity to continue to meet our mission and goals as a private Christian high school. We also believe that special accreditation allows us the necessary local control so that we can continue to exceed the minimum achievement standards.

We have an excellent brand new facility, we have a signed health assessment for all current teachers, we currently offer more than a minimum academic program/curriculum, and we will easily be able to verify that 80% of our graduates are accepted at a four-year college. We understand that there is a provision written into the law that allows a new school the necessary time to demonstrate this aspect of the accreditation requirement. We will be submitting copies of four-year college/university admission letters next spring to show that we meet or exceed the required 80% of our current senior class.

Even though not required of specially accredited non-public schools please know that Pella Christian High School does plan to continue to:

- Submit / Update a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- Report fall and spring BEDS as well as certified enrollment.
- Submit an Annual Progress Report (APR) every year.
- Respond to recent DE accreditation site visit non-compliance issues.
- Complete criminal background checks for all new hires if desired by the Department of Education.
- Continue to employ licensed teachers of the highest moral and ethical character.
- Have a high number of graduation requirements, including Bible/religion classes that public schools do not require.
- Have a 100% graduation rate with well over 90% of our graduates going on to some form of post-secondary educational institution(s).

I know that you indicated at a recent Governor's Non-Public School Advisory Committee meeting that the Department has pre-filed a bill to place a cap on this current type of accreditation. You also indicated to our Principal, Mr. Darryl De Ruitter, in response to his question, that a school could still become specially accredited at this time since the law was still current. Therefore we are making this request at this time.

Please reply to us as soon as possible with confirmation that we are recognized by the Iowa Department of Education as a specially accredited high school so that we can move forward as such.

Sincerely,



Mr. Bryce Arkema, PCHS School Board President



Mrs. Glenda Van Woerkom, PCHS School Board Secretary

Enclosures: School Board Minutes from 11.23.09