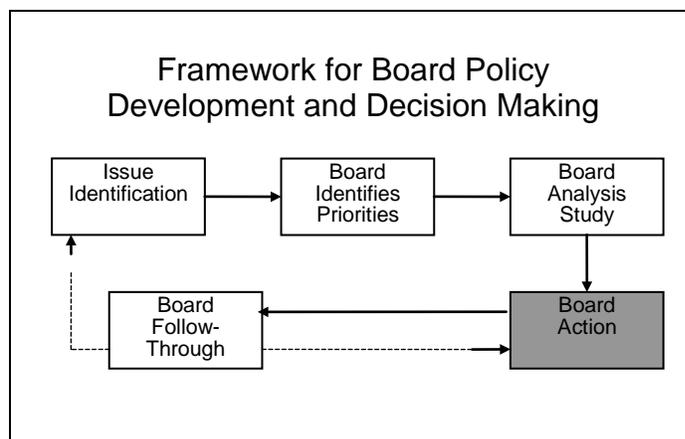


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

May 15, 2014



Agenda Item: Request for Independent Accrediting Agency Approval

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

**State Board Role/
Authority:**

Iowa Code section 256.11 grants authority to the State Board to maintain a list of approved independent accrediting agencies.

Presenter: Beth Happe, Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the American Montessori Society (AMS) as a “reliable authority concerning the quality of education” and grant AMS authority to accredit nonpublic schools in the state of Iowa.

Background: A nonpublic school may be accredited by an independent accrediting agency that appears on a list maintained by the State Board of Education. The State Board shall maintain a list of approved independent accrediting agencies comprised of at least six regional or national nonprofit, nongovernmental agencies recognized as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education offered by a school and shall publish the list of independent accrediting agencies on the department’s internet site. The list shall include accrediting agencies that, as of January 1, 2013, accredited a nonpublic school in this state that was concurrently accredited under this section; and any agency that has a formalized partnership agreement with another agency on the list and has member schools in this state as of January

1, 2013. [Five agencies met this standard at the enactment of these rules: Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), Christian Schools International (CSI), AdvancEd, The National Lutheran Schools Association (NLSA), and The Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI). AMS seeks authority to be the sixth agency on the list of those approved by the board.]

AMS is the advocate for quality Montessori education, an innovative, child-centered approach to learning. AMS sets the professional standards that inform Montessori education as practiced in AMS-accredited schools and taught in AMS-affiliated teacher education programs. AMS currently accredits 159 Montessori programs and has over 1,300 member schools worldwide.

Additionally, AMS is an accredited member organization of the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPA) a national organization that serves as a review panel for the standards and review procedures of private school accrediting agencies. Because AMS is member of NCPA, schools that are accredited by AMS are also accredited by NCPA.

Recommendation for Approval of American Montessori Society as an Independent Accrediting Agency of Nonpublic Schools

Requirements:

Evidence has been provided and the following requirements have been met:

- The agency's accreditation standards require a school to set high academic and nonacademic standards for all students, including preparation of students for postsecondary success.
- The agency's accreditation standards require a school to monitor and assess all students' progress toward high academic and nonacademic standards.
- The agency's accreditation standards require a school to recruit and retain properly licensed quality professional staff, and provide those staff members with ongoing professional development.
- The agency's accreditation standards set requirements for fiscal, data, and contract management.
- The agency monitors compliance with its standards and takes appropriate corrective action when standards are not met.
- The agency itself has appropriate fiscal, data, and contract management policies and procedures.
- No uncorrected citation of noncompliance by any governmental or nongovernmental agency or organization with jurisdiction or oversight of the accrediting agency.
- No uncorrected negative audit finding of an accrediting agency.
- No judgments, orders, decrees, consent decrees, settlement agreements, or verdicts concerning the agency entered by any state or federal court of competent jurisdiction.
- The agency continues to retain its nonprofit status.
- The agency listed has received some form of recognition for innovation or excellence concerning its work.

Summary of Scoring Process:

The American Montessori Society (AMS) application was scored using a scoring matrix aligned with the criteria for recognizing an independent accrediting agency as set forth in Administrative Code rule 281—12.10(4). Four Department of Education employees scored the application and unanimously recommend the State Board of Education to add AMS to the list of approved independent accrediting agencies.

Highlights/Strengths of the Application:

- AMS is a non-profit, non-discriminatory service organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting the use of the Montessori teaching approach in private and public schools.
- AMS's school accreditation program has been accredited by NCPA, the National Council for Private School Accreditation, since 2005. NCPA is a national organization that serves as a review panel for the standards and review procedures of private school accrediting agencies. NCPA accredits 17 accrediting agencies serving over 4,600 member schools and 832,000 students. Because AMS is member of NCPA, schools that are accredited by AMS are also accredited by NCPA.
- AMS currently has accredited schools in 29 states and two countries (Mexico and Czech Republic) in addition to the United States.
- AMS identifies nine accreditation standards by which it accredits public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools.
- AMS has a process in place to suspend or remove accreditation from a school.