



A Guide for Parents

"NCA CASI accreditation designates high quality. It assures parents that schools have quality improvement plans and are working to improve the education of all students."

– Bill Fisher, Parent, CEO, and School Board Member, Arkansas

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools. The goal of accreditation is to evaluate, verify and improve each school's quality.

What is NCA CASI?

Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that accredits public and private schools and school districts in 19 states, the Navajo Nation, and the Department of Defense Dependents' Schools overseas.



One of six regional accrediting associations nationwide, NCA CASI accredits more than 9,000 schools, touching over five million students.



How does a school earn NCA CASI accreditation?

To be accredited, schools must:

1) Meet NCA's high standards.

The standards address all aspects of schooling, ensuring that: students are taught by qualified teachers, class sizes are reasonable, the curriculum is sound and rigorous, student services and activity programs are plentiful, and schools are safe and financially stable.

2) Implement a school improvement plan.

Schools must demonstrate continuous improvement. They must implement an improvement plan, based on data, that includes clear goals for raising the achievement of all students, and they must document growth in student performance.

3) Host an external peer review team.

Schools must be evaluated by a team of professionals from outside the school – this is known as the external peer review team. The team engages the school in a healthy professional dialog about what the school personnel are doing and what more they could be doing to benefit students.

Each year, schools report on how they are meeting the standards. They also submit external team reports and documentation from their school improvement efforts to NCA CASI. These materials are used in determining the accreditation status for each school.

What does accreditation mean to me?

It means that you can rest assured that your children are receiving a quality education.

It means that:

- Your children are taught by qualified teachers;
- Their classes are appropriately staffed;
- They are receiving a rich, diverse, and sound curriculum;
- They can participate in a wide array of student activities;
- They have access to a range of support services; and
- The school meets safety standards.

It means that the credits your children earn will be recognized by schools, colleges, and universities around the world.

It means that your children have access to specific sports programs, certain federal loans, various scholarships, and admission to colleges, technical schools, or military programs that require students to come from regionally accredited schools.

It means that your children are taught by faculty who are dedicated to raising student achievement. A recent study of schools actively implementing NCA CASI's process showed that 79% achieved verifiable gains in student performance.

NCA CASI accreditation means that your school has opened its doors to review and validation from an organization that has over 100 years of experience in evaluating educational quality.

(read more on reverse)

“The structure of NCA provides a school of any size the opportunity to provide quality education for their students.”
– Joann Mortensen, Parent and School Board Member, Arizona

How can I get involved?

Become informed.

- Talk with your school principal about the school’s accreditation and improvement efforts.
- Ask to see a copy of the school’s improvement plan. Review the plan to see what goals the school is working on and what strategies the faculty members are using to raise student achievement.
- Ask to see a copy of the NCA CASI external review team report. Read the commendations and recommendations from the team.

Volunteer.

- Volunteer to assist the school administration and faculty with their school improvement efforts. Ask your school principal and/or your children’s teachers how and where you can be of greatest assistance.

Educate.

- Educate other parents about the value of your school’s accreditation.
- Help inform the parent community about the school’s improvement efforts.

Reinforce.

- Reinforce with your children the skills the school is working to improve.



To learn more about NCA CASI accreditation,
visit www.ncacasi.org.
or talk with staff from your NCA CASI state office
at 1-800-525-9517, option 2.

