



COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL
STANDARDS & ACCOUNTABILITY

CESA Head of School Certification

Certification Standards Self-Evaluation

Mission Statement

The Council on Educational Standards and Accountability exists to motivate, support, and hold accountable Christian schools that aspire to superlative academic standards, institutional best practices, and collaboration with like-minded schools.

Vision Statement

The Council on Educational Standards and Accountability relentlessly pursues excellence, accountability, collegiality, sustainability, and continuous improvement in school that profess Jesus as Lord.

Leading a Christian educational institution is a multi-faceted responsibility. It is an important goal of CESA to have highly-trained Christian leaders around the world leading schools. Some leaders may be called to inner-city work, others to international work, while others may be called to suburban independent schools. It is vital to put strong Christian leaders in schools across the country and world in order to further Christian education.

The first value proposition that distinguishes CESA from other Christian school organizations and brings value to member schools specifically and Christian education generally is the edification of the Christian school head. The purpose of the CESA head certification process is ultimately the personal and professional growth and development of the Christian school head by strengthening his or her leadership in reference to peer-reviewed and peer-generated professional standards. The process envisions a three-part process of personal guided reflection, assessment by those who know and best understand the leader's practice, and peer discussion with two mentor heads of school from the CESA network, all centered around the standards. This process will lead to heightened self-awareness, deeper understanding of one's strengths as a leader, and a clear, personalized direction for next-level professional growth.

CESA has a bias toward leadership, and operates from a fundamental belief that the best way to grow capacity in schools is to invest in the head. Through head certification in CESA:

- School heads gain access to a network of leaders with a track record of superior leadership, engaged in a personalized assessment of the school head's leadership practice.
- Heads of school engage in professional growth characterized by robust conversation on matters common to mature schools and heads of those schools, yet specific to the leadership of the head partaking in the assessment. Through these robust discussions, CESA acts as an accelerator to the careers of heads of school and the missions and successes of their schools.
- Heads of school gain access to the unparalleled Christian collegiality of CESA school head network. Trust, encouragement, and accountability lift the professional experience of CESA heads to new heights, and allow heads to think about their leadership of their schools in new, creative ways.

Steps to Certification

There are three aspects or phases of the head of school certification process.

First, heads engage in a self-reflective process, guided by the CESA head of school certification standards. The purpose of the self-report is for school heads to gain an honest look at their leadership skills, areas of strength and the areas needing further growth. Realizing that leadership is a practice of constant growth, no leader may be exceptional at every level and in every category.

The second phase of certification includes an observer assessment by six members of the school community who best know and understand the head of school's leadership practice, again, relevant to the standards. Observers will use the CESA Standards to reflect on the head's leadership.

Written feedback will come from the six observers, which are to include the administrative team and board members. The self-reflection and observer assessments will be submitted to the Director of Head Certification and reviewed by the visiting team of two CESA-certified heads. A link to an electronic survey will be given to the applicant's 360° participants. The visiting team may wish to have phone calls with participants prior to the visit.

The third and final phase of certification will consist of a school site visit and assessment/mentoring/coaching session by two CESA Member of Council heads of school.

The reviewing heads will then meet with the participant head to review the first two phases and the interviews, and engage in a robust discussion concerning strengths and opportunities for professional growth. The goal of the evaluation is to analyze the potential for receiving the CESA Certified Head of School designation, as well as for the head of school to plan and map specific paths in development.

The head of school certification process is performed as a separate process from the school's institutional review process.

CESA-certified heads of school are entitled to include such designation on their curricula vitae; they are entitled to attend special gatherings at CESA symposia; they are eligible to participate in special conversations and trainings organized around the standards and their professional growth plans; and, they are eligible to engage in teaching and training aspiring heads of school in the CESA network. If a CESA-certified head of school moves from a CESA school to a non-CESA school, the CESA head certification travels with him or her.

Other than the costs of the assessment, certification is a service of membership in CESA.

Heads who are retired or serve non-CESA schools may be required to pay individual dues to retain their certification.

There are five certification standard categories:

- Mission Clarity
- Effective Governance
- Institutional Viability
- Academic and Programmatic Distinction
 - Sense of Coherent Community

SCORING

A score of 5 points indicates that a head of school exceeds expectations. A score of 4 points indicates that the head of school is performing highly in that area. A score of 3 points indicates that a head of school meets the minimum requirement for that standard or sub-standard. A score of 1-2 points indicates partial fulfillment of that standard or sub-standard. A score of 0 points indicates the standard or sub-standard is not being met.

MEMBER RENEWAL

- Every six years, the head of school will complete a written self-report and repeat the 360° process in order to maintain certification.
- Each head of school will submit an update status on their head development plan at the end of the third year after the head received the certification designation.

STANDARD ONE: PURSUES MISSION CLARITY

- 1.1 _____ The head of school has a deep commitment to personal spiritual growth in Christ, marked by consistent practice and modeling of the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, contemplation, rest, and accountability and an understanding that he or she cannot lead his or her people spiritually anywhere that he or she has not already been.
- 1.2 _____ The head of school recognizes his or her role as chief symbol of the organization, and leads incarnationally by modeling and embodying the core values of the school.
- 1.3 _____ The head of school provides moral and spiritual leadership to the school, prophetically speaking the school's mission into the educational context through multiple forms of verbal and written communication in order to prevent mission drift.
- 1.4 _____ The head of school seeks out and maintains a dense network of colleagues and professional relationships, seeking to leverage such relationships to remain sharp, effective, and accountable.
- 1.5 _____ The head of school has effectively transferred the mission-centric philosophy throughout the school organization, such that the leadership team and employees cohesively reflect the philosophy in their words, conduct, and daily school operation.
- 1.6 _____ The head of school is a key driver and contributor to the formation of philosophy and policy that governs how the organizational mission is carried out through the various functions of the school (curriculum and pedagogy, discipline, athletics, fine arts, and the like)

STANDARD TWO: UNDERSTANDS AND PRACTICES EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

- 2.1 _____ The head of school has a profound understanding of best practices of board governance, and "leads his or her supervisors" well by guiding them toward healthy board function.
- 2.2 _____ The head of school seeks out and maintains authentic, transparent relationships with board members, and has an overall healthy, effective working relationship with his or her board.
- 2.3 _____ The head of school "leads his or her board" to the creation of living and active, and effective strategic planning that actually governs school initiatives.

- 2.4 _____ The head of school oversees the creation of dashboard metrics or school performance indicators, the status of which he or she reports regularly to the board.
- 2.5 _____ The head of school has created, maintains, and leads a healthy, functional leadership team that works effectively together, and whose healthy functioning is reflected in a thriving faculty and staff.

STANDARD THREE: WORKS TO ENSURE INSTITUTIONAL VIABILITY

- 3.1 _____ The head of school oversees the creation and ongoing management of consistently balanced budgets, leading to operational viability without borrowing and/or having operational surpluses.
- 3.2 _____ The head of school is an effective fundraiser for the school, taking the lead with significant donors to provide for the ongoing sustainability, capital projects, special initiatives of the school.
- 3.3 _____ The head of school actively and creatively seeks to develop new avenues of resource development to fund the school's current and future growth.
- 3.4 _____ The head of school manages a budget in which the annual debt service payment is significantly lower than the school's annual cash operating expenses, a debt level (total liabilities) that does not exceed 2.5 times the school's unrestricted net assets, and a loan to value ratio in which debt does not exceed 80% of the current market value of the underlying property that it collateralizes.
- 3.5 _____ The head of school actively participates in the recruitment of new families, and the re-recruitment of existing families for retention purposes.
- 3.6 _____ The head of school has a working knowledge of the law as it pertains to employment, liability, and regulatory issues affecting private schools, knows how and when to seek appropriate legal counsel, and maintains a healthy balance of risk management and operational effectiveness.
- 3.7 _____ The head of school has a working knowledge of technology, including social media and digital technology, and uses such technology to enhance his or her own effectiveness, as well as working in concert with other stakeholders to develop a school-wide vision for digital learning.
- 3.8 _____ The head of school is a forward-thinking leader maintaining a growth-mindset for the school and displaying this mindset through setting a vision for the administrative team, faculty, parents, alumni, and trustees.

- 3.9 _____ The head of school reflects high expectations for the employees of the school consistently attracting, retaining, developing, and evaluating the employees so that the educational environment of the school is always maintaining the highest of standards.
- 3.10 _____ The school campus maintains a sense of order, cleanliness, and high standards associated with strong leadership.

STANDARD FOUR: PROVIDES ACADEMIC AND PROGRAMMATIC LEADERSHIP

- 4.1 _____ The head of school has a clearly-defined academic vision for the school, one that reflects the stated mission of the institution, its faculty, its learners, and its community, and has established and maintains the personnel and infrastructure necessary to effectuate the vision.
- 4.2 _____ The head of school has a global focus, and works with other stakeholders to develop a vision for how students at his or her school can be equipped in an increasingly globalized, pluralistic world to be missionally effective and effectively equipped to be creators and cultivators of culture.
- 4.3 _____ The head of school presides over a school that is recognized by its accrediting body and others for academic distinction and excellence, or can demonstrate that it is actively emerging toward such excellence.
- 4.4 _____ The head of school oversees the implementation of a program of “value added assessment” in his or her school, in order to track student achievement on the basis of meaningful improvement over time, requiring, at minimum, annual benchmarking in mission-critical subject and skill areas, and annual reporting demonstrating progress or regress in those areas.
- 4.5 _____ The head of school is a lifetime learner, and models learning for his or her leadership team, faculty, and staff through formal and informal ongoing education, and is an advocate and facilitator for the same throughout the faculty.
- 4.6 _____ The head of school is a proactive innovator, or realizes its value, developing or fostering the development of creative initiatives and ideas for enhancing the educational excellence of the school, and creating a culture where the ideas of others can be incubated and explored.

STANDARD FIVE: PROMOTES COHERENT COMMUNITY

- 5.1 _____ The head of school leads the building of authentic Christian community within the school, characterized by spiritual focus, care for one another, healthy relationships, and high trust.
- 5.2 _____ The head is accessible and communicates effectively with all constituencies.
- 5.3 _____ The head of school has a high level of emotional intelligence, and relates well to each of the various constituencies within the school, creating coalitions and joining people together to create strong collaborative networks within the school.
- 5.4 _____ The head of school leads a vibrant internal culture among the leadership team, faculty and staff, characterized by high trust, effective collaboration, healthy dialogue, biblical conflict resolution, and collective spiritual growth.
- 5.5 _____ The head of school includes the leadership team in decision-making and has a balanced level of control in leading the team.
- 5.6 _____ The head of school models spiritual care and guidance to families who are struggling or suffering within the school community, building a “Body of Christ” ethos, a supportive network within the school.
- 5.7 _____ The head of school establishes and presides over celebrations, traditions, and rituals that reinforce and undergird the school community’s mission and collective identity.
- 5.8 _____ The head of school effectively communicates regularly and often with the school community, reinforcing the mission of the school and how that plays out in community life.
- 5.9 _____ The head of school leads the school community in effectively engaging with the broader community in which it resides, serving as salt and light to the community in which they reside, to the community in which they reside.
- 5.10 _____ The head of school is an effective ambassador for the school, serving as an effective voice and advocate for the school with the media and in the broader community.