



COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL
STANDARDS & ACCOUNTABILITY

CESA Head of School Certification

Certification Standards and Assessment

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.

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:

- *Local school heads gain access to a network of leaders with a track record of superior leadership.*
- *Maintain professional growth challenged by robust conversation on matters common to mature schools. CESA acts as an accelerator to the careers of heads of school and the missions and successes of their schools.*
 - *The Christian collegiality of CESA school heads is unparalleled. Trust, encouragement, and accountability lift the professional experience of CESA heads to new heights.*

HOS certification begins with the question, “*Why am I doing this? Am I doing this to grow and identify soft spots in my leadership or am I doing this to seek another credential?*” We urge each head of school to reflect on their personal motive for seeking certification. We created this experience within the frame of a growth mindset, continuous improvement and professional development, not mere credentialing. Head of school certification is based on honest dialogue, personal transparency, peer affirmation and a healthy response to feedback as well as the meeting of standards.

Validation of standards fulfillment is determined through a self-assessment and a peer review process. If reservations are noted during the peer assessment process, the visiting team will either recommend provisional certification (conditional on increasing effectiveness in one or more standards) or defer certification until documented deficiencies are addressed. It is the responsibility of the Director of Head Certification to delay certification if the standards are not clearly affirmed on the front end.

To qualify as a CESA certified head of school, there is a prerequisite of **five** years experience as a head of school and **three** years as a sitting head of a CESA Member of Council school.

The following prerequisites are also essential to our certification protocol:

- Nomination by a certified head plus recommendations from **two** certified heads.
- The experience of leading one's current school through a CESA Institutional Review.
- Annual participation in the CESA Symposium and the CESA Heads Retreat (accommodating emergency circumstances as necessary).
- The reading of an assigned book (e.g., Keller's *Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, Allender's *Leading with a Limp* or Zahl's *Low Anthropology, etc.*) prior to a certification team's visit.
- A site visit to another CESA Member of Council school every other year.

The purpose of the self-assessment is for school heads to take an honest look at their leadership skills and the areas needing further growth. Realizing that leadership is a practice of constant growth, no leader is exceptional at every level and in every category.

The second phase of certification includes the 360° model of review. Feedback will come from various members of the school community including the administrative team, immediate work circle, faculty, parents, trustees, as well as some external sources, such as suppliers, other interested stakeholders, and peer group.

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 is exceptional in this function. 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 could grow in this area but meets the minimum requirement for that standard or substandard. A score of 1-2 points indicates partial fulfillment of that standard or sub-standard. A score of 0 points indicates the standard or substandard is not being met.

CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

To remain a CESA certified head in good standing, the following expectations must be fulfilled:

- Every three years, the certified head will have an extended conversation about leadership growth and challenges with the Director of Head Certification.
- Every six years, the certified head will experience a fresh 360 dialogue with the Director of Head Certification.

STANDARD ONE: 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 executive of the organization and leads by modeling and embodying the core values of the school. This is documented in the annual head of school evaluation by the board of trust.

1.3 _____ The head of school can provide evidence of moral and spiritual leadership to the school, accurately speaking the school's mission into the educational context through multiple forms of verbal and written communication 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. Specifically, how has the head of school actively pursued personal and professional development?

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. What evidence supports this conclusion?

1.6 _____ The head of school drives and contributes to the formation of the philosophy and policies that governs how the organizational mission is carried out through the various functions of the school (curriculum and pedagogy, discipline, athletics, fine arts, etc.).

STANDARD TWO: 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 including ongoing board education.
- 2.2 _____ The head of school “leads his or her board” to define and adhere to written policies defining the roles and responsibilities of the board and head of school.
- 2.3 _____ 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.
- 2.4 _____ 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.
- 2.5 _____ 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.
- 2.6 _____ 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: 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 below 10% of 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.
- 3.11 _____ The school head utilizes a regular administrative dashboard that summarizes the current status of school operations for the board's information.

STANDARD FOUR: ACADEMIC AND PROGRAMMATIC DISTINCTION

- 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 is establishing 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 (Crouch, *Creating 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 effectively monitors a dashboard of learning metrics which track student growth and learning trends over a three to five year period.
- 4.5 _____ The head of school is a lifetime learner, and models learning for his 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 creates a culture where the ideas of others can be incubated and explored.

STANDARD FIVE: 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, biblical conflict resolution, and collective spiritual growth.
- 5.5 _____ The head of school collaboratively includes a strong, cohesive leadership team in decision-making and has a balanced level of influence in leading the team while retaining responsibility and accountability for decisions made.
- 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 community in effectively engaging with the broader community in which it resides, serving as salt and light as it effectively “seeks the welfare of its city.”
- 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.