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MERKOS L'INYONEI CHINUCH

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

INITIAL VISIT INSTRUCTIONS AND CHECKLIST



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MISSION AND VISION

Mission Statement

The mission of the National Accreditation Board is to foster the continuous pursuit of educational excellence through an accreditation process which is unique to Yeshivas, Jewish day schools and Jewish Early Childhood education centers. It is a process established by the Jewish education community to facilitate and assure the quality of education within the Jewish education movement. Through the National Accreditation Board, the Chinuch Office of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch can facilitate continuous educational improvement and validate the achievement of quality education in both Judaic and General studies, nationwide.

Vision of the National Accreditation Board

Accreditation through the National Accreditation Board of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch facilitates continuous educational improvement and it validates the achievement of quality education in both Judaic and General studies, nationwide. It is the core belief of the NAB is that the accreditation process is the best vehicle to promote and affect school improvement and educational excellence. Accreditation should therefore become an imperative of Jewish schools. The NAB provides the training and mechanism for a successful accreditation process and helps generate the enthusiasm, which make the accreditation protocols effective and meaningful.

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INTRODUCTION:

The National Accreditation Board was established by Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch in order to promote an accreditation protocol which is unique to Yeshivas and Day Schools. It is a process established by Yeshiva Day School professionals for Yeshivas and day schools. And while the process is identical to that offered by the regional U.S. agencies, the Principles and Standards are unique to them.

The mission and purpose of the National Accreditation Board is to foster the continuous pursuit of educational excellence in both Judaic and general academic subjects. A self-study peer review creates an atmosphere conducive to educational progress. Strategic, long-term planning sets the stage for an ongoing process of advancement toward excellence.

This is to say that the Standards of the NAB are rigorous as is its accreditation process. Thus a school which has undergone full accreditation protocol with NAB, may be assured that it has matched the accreditation requirements from any accrediting body. Moreover, the accreditation protocols of the NAB include the most demanding standards from the Judaica department to which others cannot honestly lay claim. The accreditation process, similar to that of other accrediting agencies in the United States consists of three components:

1. **Self-Study:** this includes review of the past as well as strategic planning for the future.
2. **Peer Review** by a National Accreditation Board team of visitors.
3. **Periodic re-evaluation:** all schools at the highest level of accreditation must participate in a re-evaluation process containing elements of self-study, site visit and final review on a five to seven year rotation basis.

It is essential that the school understands what it is about to undertake, though it is likely that it will not fully appreciate the benefits of the process until after it has been completed. That is one of the tasks of the initial accreditation visitors.

The visitor must be able to thoroughly review the process and make sure that members of the administration, the faculty and steering committee fully understand what is expected of them.

THE INITIAL VISIT:

Before embarking upon an accreditation protocol the school should review the NAB accreditation standards and be prepared to meet or exceed them in the course of its self-study. This should be communicated to them by the visitor in advance of the visit.

If the school feels it is ready to begin the process a NAB representative will conduct an initial visit to ascertain that the school is in fact ready. The visit consists of:

- Meetings with the school head and administrators
- A Meeting with the school board or trustees
- Visits to all classrooms (while they are in operation), and
- A meeting with the steering committee (the group that oversees the self-study and assures that everyone is on task and on deadline)
- A meeting with as many key faculty members as possible (it is unlikely that all faculty members will be able to attend, though that could help make their involvement with the process easier) to explain the “how” and “why” of the process.

A number of important steps are accomplished at the time of the initial visit.

- The school officials will be able to make sure they fully understand the expectation and how they are accomplished.
- The NAB representative will indicate through a check list that the school is indeed able to fully comply with all the standards.
- If the visitor should feel that the school falls short in any area, the school will be made aware of how to address that deficiency prior to starting the self-study.
- At the meeting with the steering committee the visitor will guide its members through the steps required of a successful self-study, answer any questions and reassure them that they are not alone and that assistance is always available to them from the NAB.

The visitor will then submit a written report of his/her findings to the director. The director will then communicate the findings to the administrator of the prospective member school.

- If the findings are that the school has met the initial application requirements the school shall be considered a candidate for accreditation within the association, and will be granted *pre-accreditation (eligibility)* status.

- If the findings are that the school has not met the initial application requirements, the report will outline the necessary actions the school needs to undertake to satisfy the requirements.
- Upon being accepted as a candidate, the school shall be granted a time period of no more than eighteen months to complete the self-study and host an accreditation team visit.

APPLICATION STANDARDS

BASIC OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

- The primary purpose of the sponsoring organization is to operate a Yeshiva Day School and to educate Jewish children in both Judaic and general studies.
- The school is chartered, licensed, and meets applicable federal, state, and local laws in all its operations.
- Facilities and funding are adequate to offer an educational program on pre-school, elementary or high school levels.
- The administration and staff are appropriately qualified for their assigned duties.
- Provisions are made to account for students' attendance, academic progress, personal growth, health and safety.
- The philosophy and goals of the school have been appropriately articulated and published.
- All of the school's operations are open to evaluation by the National Accreditation Board.
- The school operations are guided by Halachic requirements in all matters.

SELF-STUDY STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS:

- The school has a clearly stated philosophy of Jewish education, setting forth the examined beliefs of the school's faculty, administration, and policy making authority on the education of its students as well as the school's mission and goals has been published.
- There is a study of the school and its community * which describes and analyzes the students the school serves, the community in which they reside, and the resources the community offers in support of the educational activities of the school.
- Learning and pupil services will be evaluated in the light of the philosophy of the school, i.e. that they implement in fact what the philosophy states in theory.
- The outcome of the educational experience will be evaluated and the evaluations reveal results which are representatives of Yeshiva or Day School education in general and meet reasonable expectations of the community served by the school.

- The resources of the school will be evaluated in the light of its philosophy, areas of learning, and student services.
- The evaluative judgments by the faculty will be stated in the self-study.
- The visiting team will need to confirm that the data and analysis in the self-study report accurately reflect the state of affairs in the school.
- The team will confirm that no significant element of the self-study is omitted from the self-study report.
- The visiting team will need to confirm that the school evaluated itself in relation to its stated philosophy and identified needs of its community.
- The visiting team report will need to confirm that the team had a full experience of the school and is satisfied that its judgments of the school are dependable.
- The school develops a strategic action plan for its long term improvement.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION STANDARDS

- The governing body of the school established policies and has instituted consistent procedures and regulations to implement the policies. It maintains the continuity of school events and demonstrates an effective grasp of problems that may arise.
- In all matters requirements of Halacha are paramount. The school must identify the halachic authority to whom it refers its halachic questions.
- Evaluation (both formal and informal) is an effective and continuing aspect of school experience.
- The education personal resources, physical plant and fiscal management are representative of Yeshiva Day School practice recommended by Torah Umesorah or the Chinuch Office of Merkos and are sufficient and so deployed as to implement the purposes of the school and assure the health and safety of its students.

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- The school maintains projections of enrollment, income, expenditures, and other matters which bear heavily upon controlled development.
- The school has models for the analysis of student experience which produce understandings useful in improving its quality.

- The school maintains planning procedures that include participation by representative elements of the school's faculty and community which guide a continuous effort to improve the quality of its service.
- The school's policy making authority is committed to goals of demonstrated strategic merit.

THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS:

- Accreditation is an opportunity for a school to learn, to grow and move forward. A school engages in a self-study process to assess its own effectiveness based on established standards and guidelines, and it is able to simultaneously make changes and improvements and finally to report its results.
- During the self-study process, the school will use an evaluation instrument to study and evaluate all its programs and their effectiveness. All the stakeholders including faculty, staff, administration as well as the governing body and wider school community must respond honestly to the questionnaires and complete all self-assessment checklists (see 9.9.1). The steering committee will record all the findings, and the results and interpretation of the data for exhibition in the Self-Study Document (accreditation notebook).
- As the self-study proceeds, the school compiles the extensive Self-Study Document based upon its institutional introspection. As the findings of the Self-study, resulting from all the internal evaluations unfold, the school may well decide to provide in-service training for personnel, or make other necessary changes and adjustments so as meet all required standards. Assistance from the National Accreditation Board is available to schools during the self-study process.
- Perhaps the most important component of the self-study process is that it generates a **strategic plan** for future improvement. In the strategic plan, the school outlines areas where the school can make improvements and changes which will move it further in the direction of educational excellence. The plan will naturally be consistent with its stated philosophy and statement, and will include a timetable for its implementation. It is up to the school to see to it that its strategic plan for future improvement is in fact brought to fruition. The National Accreditation Board will want to see evidence of its implementation in annual reports and reevaluations. The school may choose to defer the final draft of its strategic plan for future improvement until after it receives the site visitation report.
- Generally a period of twelve months will be sufficient for the school to conduct and report on the self-study. Upon its completion, the Self-Study Document is submitted to the National Accreditation Board for review. The National Accreditation Board will then assign a visiting committee to the applying school.
- Some schools may have gone through a recent self-study as part of another accreditation program. The National Accreditation Board may choose to recognize this process as a status level towards accreditation; however, final recognition of accreditation will be deferred until after the site visit, and formal review.

NAB SITE VISITATION (Peer Review):

On-site visitation is critical to the objective validation of school effectiveness and is an integral part of the accreditation process. It precedes any decisions regarding the awarding of final accreditation status. The results of the site visit will serve as a key element in the formal review and recognition process of the school.

Specifically the objectives of the visit are:

- To assure the Accreditation Committee that the self-study was objective and accurate and that it reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The Visitation Committee will verify that all of the materials submitted by the school are accurate.
- To bring objective expertise to the school to assist in current evaluation and future planning; to verify that there are no violations of National Accreditation Board standards.
- To serve as a catalyst in changing those aspects of the school operation which are not meeting National Accreditation Board standards.

Evaluation is conducted by persons with no vested interest in the school, familiar with the accreditation standards and procedures, and knowledgeable of sound Torah-oriented educational practices. Some of the visitors will be representatives of the National Accreditation Board; others will be representatives of peer institutions.

- Visitation teams involved in site visits are limited in their activities to gathering information and making recommendations. Formal reports of these visits are forwarded to the National Accreditation Board for final review.
- The Visiting Committee will appraise the quality and comprehensiveness of the school's self-study, make recommendations for further study and implementation, and assess the extent to which principles and standards are being met.
- Follow-up of the self-study by the accredited school shall include: study of the Visiting Committee Report, determination of the areas that need additional attention, identification of new needs, establishment of priorities for action, and the implementation of plans for improvement.
- The Accreditation Board chairman will receive the self-study and the Site Visitation Committee Report and after preliminary review to assure basic compliance with all standards, will refer them to the National Accreditation Board. The Visitation Committee may recommend further action by the school, further investigation as to full compliance with standards, or may recommend that the National Accreditation Board grants a particular level of accreditation status to

candidate schools. This will be done in a formal Statement of Recommendation the National Accreditation Board.

The Site Visitation Team may recommend one of the following:

- a. **Accreditation:** All standards have been met satisfactorily; the school's strategic plan for future improvement is in place.
- b. **Accreditation advised:** All standards appear to have been met, but further clarification is necessary on one or more standards or related issues; or the school's strategic long-term plan is not yet in place.
- c. **Provisional Accreditation:** One or more standards may have not been fully met – and a specific timetable for compliance is issued, or if the strategic plan for future improvement has not yet been formally adopted and finalized.
- d. **Non-Accreditation:** One or more standards have not been met, and no timetable exists for compliance, or if a strategic plan for future improvement has not been devised.

After review of the Preliminary Accreditation Committee report and its Statement of Recommendation, the Accreditation Board will **formally designate** schools previously visited as "accredited", "accredited advised", "provisionally accredited", or "not accredited." An appeal of an unfavorable decision may be made to the Accreditation Board within three months after the decision. A school "not accredited" for failure to meet standards may be revisited in the following year if efforts to rectify deficiencies are evident. The decision to have the school revisited rests with the applicant school.

REEVALUATION:

Accreditation is both a result and an ongoing process; some accreditation agencies even refer to their accrediting process as “continuing improvement”. As such, it is essential to insure that members are maintaining the level of quality present at their initial recognition. To do so, the accreditation process provides for the periodic reevaluation of members.

Annual reports will be required of accredited schools at the highest level of accreditation and/or recognition to assure that standards and other requirements are being fulfilled on a continual basis. Annual reports will require information in three essential areas:

- (1) statistical and demographic information,
- (2) any substantive changes that may have occurred, and
- (3) how the school is progressing in the implementation of its strategic improvement plan.

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

of
MERKOS L'INYONEI CHINUCH

CHECKLIST for INITIAL VISITORS

Name of School

Address

Name of school visitor and date of visit

Name of NAB Visitor

Signature of visitor

Please circle the appropriate letter for each standard and comment as necessary

		BASIC OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
Y	N	The primary purpose of the sponsoring organization is to operate a Yeshiva Day School and to educate Jewish children in both Judaic and general studies.
Y	N	The school is chartered, licensed, and meets applicable federal, state, and local laws in all its operations.
Y	N	Facilities and funding are adequate to offer an educational program on pre-school, elementary or high school levels.
Y	N	The administration and staff are appropriately qualified for their assigned duties.
Y	N	Provisions are made to account for students' attendance, academic progress, personal growth, health and safety.
Y	N	The philosophy and goals of the school have been appropriately articulated and published.
Y	N	All of the school's operations are open to evaluation by the National Accreditation Board.
Y	N	The school operations are guided by Halachic requirements in all matters.

Comments

		SELF-STUDY STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS:
Y	N	The school has a clearly stated philosophy of Jewish education, setting forth the examined beliefs of the school's faculty, administration, and policy making authority on the education of its students as well as the school's mission and goals has been published.
Y	N	There is a study of the school and its community * which describes and analyzes the students the school serves, the community in which they reside, and the resources the community offers in support of the educational activities of the school.
Y	N	Learning and pupil services will be evaluated in the light of the philosophy of the school, i.e. that they implement in fact what the philosophy states in theory.
Y	N	The outcome of the educational experience will be evaluated and the evaluations reveal results which are representatives of Yeshiva or Day School education in general and meet reasonable expectations of the community served by the school.
Y	N	The resources of the school will be evaluated in the light of its philosophy, areas of learning, and student services.
Y	N	The evaluative judgments by the faculty will be stated in the self-study.
Y	N	The visiting team will need to confirm that the data and analysis in the self-study report accurately reflect the state of affairs in the school.
Y	N	The team will confirm that no significant element of the self-study is omitted from the self-study report.
Y	N	The visiting team will need to confirm that the school evaluated itself in relation to its stated philosophy and identified needs of its community.
Y	N	The visiting team report will need to confirm that the team had a full experience of the school and is satisfied that its judgments of the school are dependable.
Y	N	The school develops a strategic action plan for its long term improvement.
		Comments

		SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION STANDARDS
Y	N	The governing body of the school established policies and has instituted consistent procedures and regulations to implement the policies. It maintains the continuity of school events and demonstrates an effective grasp of problems that may arise.
Y	N	In all matters requirements of Halacha are paramount. The school must identify the halachic authority to whom it refers its halachic questions.
Y	N	Evaluation (both formal and informal) is an effective and continuing aspect of school experience.
Y	N	The education personal resources, physical plant and fiscal management are representative of Yeshiva Day School practice recommended by Torah Umesorah or the Chinuch Office of Merkos and are sufficient and so deployed as to implement the purposes of the school and assure the health and safety of its students.
		SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
Y	N	The school maintains projections of enrollment, income, expenditures, and other matters which bear heavily upon controlled development.
Y	N	The school has models for the analysis of student experience which produce understandings useful in improving its quality.
Y	N	The school maintains planning procedures that include participation by representative elements of the school's faculty and community which guide a continuous effort to improve the quality of its service.
Y	N	The school's policy making authority is committed to goals of demonstrated strategic merit.

Comments