



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Indiana State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Office of School Accountability, Indiana Department of Education  
**RE:** Third-Party Recognition Petition for American Montessori Society  
**DATE:** February 1, 2023

This memorandum provides a summary of the information provided by the organization in the petition, as well as the Department's final recommendation regarding the recognition of the American Montessori Society (AMS) as a third-party accrediting organization.

### Department Recommendation

The department recommends approving AMS' request to be recognized as a third-party accrediting organization for the State of Indiana.

### Background

The Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) is charged with recognizing national and regional accreditation agencies that accredit Indiana schools so that they may become eligible to participate in the Choice Scholarship Program. Pursuant to a memorandum of understanding, the department reviews petitions from accrediting organizations seeking recognition and provides a recommendation to the SBOE for action. The recommendation is based on a rubric based on five core components:

1. Overview of Agency
2. Organization Staffing
3. Internal Agency Procedures
4. Outline of Accrediting Standards for Member Schools
5. Signed Recognition Agreement

During the 2023 cycle, American Montessori Society applied for recognition.

### Organization Overview

**Mission and Objectives:** AMS "leads, empowers, and serves the global community of Montessori educators as the foremost advocate for research and policy, ongoing teacher education, and standards of accreditation..." The mission of AMS is to empower humanity to build a better world through Montessori.

AMS was founded in 1960 and has accredited schools since 1992. Since 2005, AMS has been accredited by the National Council for Private School Accreditation<sup>1</sup>. In addition, AMS has also received recognition as candidate member of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation.

**Member Schools:** AMS globally accredits 220 schools, six of which are in Indiana.

**Agency Personnel:** AMS employs 32 full time personnel, three of which are in the Office of School Accreditation. Biographies for the following staff positions was submitted:

- Senior Director of Membership and School Accreditation

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<sup>1</sup> The national council for Private School Accreditation is a national organization that accredits private school accrediting agencies.



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- School Accreditation Manager
- Accreditation Service Associate

In addition, AMS has assembled the AMS School Accreditation Commission. The Commission has between seven and eleven members who have been the head or faculty member of an accredited school.

## **Accreditation Process and Procedures**

***Review and Approval Process:*** Schools that apply for accreditation are first provided with numerous resources and a template for a self-study report. These resources include the AMS School Accreditation Standards and Criteria, the school Accreditation Handbook, and a webcast that provides an overview of the accreditation process. The initial AMS School Accreditation application includes details about the school, teacher and school administrator verification of qualifications, but also that they are in compliance with at least 80% of the accreditation standards.

Upon successful review of the initial application, the school enters the accreditation candidacy phase. The first step in the accreditation candidacy phase is the self-study. The AMS self-study protocol was developed by the AMS School Accreditation Commission and is meant to assist a school in the development and implementation of a comprehensive school improvement plan. The school assembles a self-study steering committee and other teams that gather stakeholder input about the school's mission, practices, and vision. The self-study process must include members from faculty members (all levels), administration, parents, and Board members if applicable. The Self-Study consists of the following sections:

- Profile of the School
- School's Guiding Principles and Mission
- Philosophy, Mission, and Vision
- Governance, Leadership, and Continuous Improvement
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Personnel
- Facility Resources
- Finances and Stability
- Records, Resources, and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

Upon approval of the Self-Study, an on-site visit is scheduled.

The on-site visit generally takes three to four days. The visiting team members are teachers or administrators from AMS-accredited schools who are chosen for their educational and/or administrative experience, ability to provide meaningful feedback, and their writing ability. The team consists of a team chair and one team member for every 50 students, ensuring that there is a Montessori teaching credentialed team member for each level served by the school. At the conclusion of the site visit, a report is written that provides feedback to the AMS Office of School Accreditation, the School Accreditation Commission, and to the school.

Once the head of the school has been given the opportunity to correct any factual errors in the on-site report, the report then goes to the AMS School Accreditation Commission. The AMS



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School Accreditation Commission then reviews the self-study and the on-site team report and makes a recommendation to the AMS Board.

***Expectations and Requirements for Approval:*** At least 90% of criteria within each standard must be met as verified by the onsite team review. Any unmet criteria will receive major recommendations and will be required to be addressed in annual reports as far as the progress toward compliance.

***Assistance, Monitoring and Communication:*** Once accredited, schools must maintain their accreditation status by:

- Submittal of annual accredited school report by June 30
- Maintain school membership with AMS
- Continue full compliance with AMS accreditation standards
- Acting upon the visiting team's recommendations
- Progress toward goals outlined in strategic plan

## **Accreditation Standards**

***Standards and Expectations:*** AMS' accreditation standards are reviewed every five years by the School Accreditation Commission and focus on nine main areas:

- Philosophy, Mission, and Vision
- Governance, Leadership, and Continuous Improvement – Strategic Plan
- Teaching and Learning – Educational Nature
- Documenting and Using Results – Learner Outcomes
- Personnel
- Facility Resources
- Finances & Stability
- Records, Resources, and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

Each area is broken down into multiple requirements. Schools are expected to comply with the standards during the term of their accreditation and are asked to attest to compliance annually.

***Evaluation Process:*** The AMS Board provides the final accreditation approval based on the recommendation of the AMS School Accrediting Commission. Schools that are not recommended for accreditation by the Commission will often be provided with up to one year to come into compliance with the standards. Depending on the standard, an onsite team can be sent out for verification.

## **Signed Recognition Agreement**

AMS provided the Department with a signed copy of the recognition agreement.

## **Summary of Findings**

AMS utilizes a well-thought out and organized process for the accreditation of schools that has evolved over the last 30 years. In addition to a dedicated accreditation staff, AMS has



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assembled an Accreditation Commission to ensure another perspective in the work of accreditation. AMS's accreditation process is rigorous while providing valuable feedback to the schools. Furthermore, AMS provides numerous resources to the schools to assist in their advancement.

The Department recommends approval of American Montessori Society as a third party accrediting body in Indiana.