

## WRISA FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

### MISSION STATEMENT:

The Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation annually accredits schools that meet rigorous standards of excellence and demonstrate continuous school improvement.

### CORE BELIEFS:

Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation as an organization believes:

- Education of children is the right, duty, and privilege of parents and guardians. Families benefit when parents and guardians are able to choose schools that provide an environment and curricula that are faith and/or values-based.
- Religious and independent schools by nature of their unique missions provide an education that is distinct from public education and enrich the fabric of our pluralistic democratic society.
- Education as a whole is stronger and more vibrant as a result of the contributions of religious and independent schools.
- Accreditation assists schools in setting high academic standards and achieving student growth and academic progress.
- Schools improve when they take the time to reflect on and assess the quality of their total educational program in relation to their mission and a set of educational standards. Accreditation is a means of self-reflection and assessment that uses a set of standards to identify schools' strengths and areas for growth.
- Impartial review of schools' total educational programs is critical to the integrity of the accrediting process.
- School improvement is an ongoing process.
- WRISA accredited schools are an invaluable asset to the total educational opportunities in the State of Wisconsin.

### BACKGROUND: 'VALUE-ADDED' EDUCATION:

'Value-added measures are those that attempt to indicate the educational value that the school adds over and above that which could be predicted given the backgrounds and prior attainments of the students within the school' (Hill 1995).

In the public school setting value-added approaches seek to quantify the 'value' of gains in educational attainment by recognizing that students have different levels of capability and come from different environments. Value added is generally thought of as the amount or rate of student growth over time in relation to academic outcomes on standardized tests.

In the private sector where schools are driven by religious and/or value-oriented missions, 'value added' reaches beyond test measurements and embrace the following:

- Students can succeed, both personally and academically, despite the challenges of their socio-economic background. Students are met 'where they are', nurtured, and challenged to achieve personal and academic success.

- Schools seek to employ professional staff who demonstrate educational expertise, are committed to ongoing professional development, and understand the needs of the students they serve. In faith-based schools, these professionals may see their role as a sacred calling.
- There are many reliable assessments and various interpretations of success. Value-added is not limited to academic success as demonstrated on a standardized test.

**WRISA VALUE-ADDED STATEMENT:**

Given these understandings WRISA accredited schools add value to their academic programs in the following ways:

- WRISA accredited schools are value-centered, result-oriented academic programs.
- WRISA supports faith-based member schools in their efforts to encourage students to live out the faith dimension included in the school's foundational statements. Schools should prepare students for success in school and life. WRISA accredited schools challenge students to move beyond the limitations of their environment by providing opportunities to experience personal and academic success.
- WRISA schools seek to employ teachers and administrators who are dedicated to the highest professional standards for themselves and the highest level of achievement for their students. In faith-based schools, teachers and administrators may see their role as a sacred calling. How well their students perform on standardized tests is not the basis for teacher evaluations and wages.
- WRISA accredited schools challenge students with curricula that are rigorous and promote the values embedded in the school's foundational beliefs. While attaining academic proficiency for every student in relation to state and national standards is a goal of every WRISA accredited school, student success is defined in terms of strong personal values; commitment to service in their community, American society and the global community; as well as, academic success. WRISA accredited schools accept students where they are academically when they enter the school and help them to advance according to their capabilities. Academic success starts at the baseline of where students are performing when they enter school and give due consideration to students' academic capabilities. Academic growth is monitored and measured on a regular basis as students continue at the school. Standardized testing and other forms of assessment are acceptable measures.
- WRISA accredited schools seek to create a learning culture where students are acknowledged, are safe and feel welcomed. Values are taught both formally and informally.
- WRISA accredited schools recognize the right of parents to educate their children and have access to safe, high quality, achieving schools. As such, these schools work as partners with parents to achieve success. Parents are encouraged to participate in the education of their children and school activities.