

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

June 8, 2023



Agenda Item: Royal Legacy Christian Academy

State Board Priority: All

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code section 256.11 and 281-IAC 12 provides for a process for nonpublic schools to become state accredited.

Presenter(s): Eric Heitz, Administrative Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Holly Barnes, Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

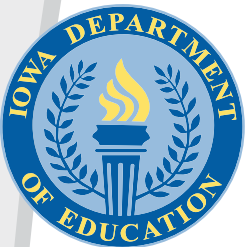
Buffy Campbell, Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the request for Royal Legacy Christian Academy to become a state accredited nonpublic school.

Background: Iowa Code section 256.11 and 281-IAC 12 provides for a process for nonpublic schools to become state accredited. The process included document review and an onsite visit.

Royal Legacy Christian Academy



June 8, 2023

State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
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State Board of Education

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Summary

The state accreditation process for a nonpublic school includes a review of documents through a desk audit and an onsite visit. Below is a summary of the information. Based on the document review and the site visit the Iowa Department of Education recommends accreditation.

School Information

Royal Legacy Christian Academy is located at 620 West 5th Street in Waterloo. The school serves kindergarten through 6th grade and has an enrollment of 16 students.

Document Review

The document review included a review of curriculum, policies and staffing. The teachers and principal are appropriately licensed. The school has met the minimum chapter 12 requirements.

Site Visit

An onsite visit was conducted on Monday, March 20, 2023, and Tuesday, March 21, 2023. Team members included:

- Buffy Campbell, Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement, Iowa Department of Education
- Chris Murphy, Superintendent, Grandview Christian School
- Melissa Hesner, Regional Administrator, Central Rivers Area Education Agency
- Dana Harskamp, Assistant Regional Administrator, Central Rivers Area Education Agency

Site Visit Celebrations and Considerations

Based on the site visit, the team developed the following celebrations and considerations.

Celebrations

As the school continues their journey, they are led by a strong team with deep experience. This includes their building leadership and staff, as well as their Board of Directors and membership on their School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC). Most are retired teachers, administrators, and school support personnel who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table.

The school includes a daycare program, pre-kindergarten through sixth grade classroom instruction and an after-school program. They also partner with House of Hope, the women's shelter in Waterloo, Habitat for Humanity, numerous local churches, and various community partners to support instruction.

All interview groups shared their appreciation for the small class size, the culture of care, respect and responsiveness to student needs, as well as the communication between the staff and the families they serve. The result of this partnership has resulted in a climate and culture that utilizes positive reinforcement, and a very low incidence of student behavior that detracts from learning.

All stakeholder groups feel that Royal Legacy is a safe and secure environment; from building security to social emotional safety in the learning environment. Multiple stakeholders expressed feeling emotionally safe and feel this is a place that truly cares for them as students, as parents, and as staff members.

It is evident that the accreditation process has provided a framework for the leadership to refine and grow their program. The school has established a vision, mission and set of core values. These drive decision-making as well as day-to-day interactions with students, families and community members. The work accomplished this past year, including meeting the accreditation criteria, i.e. development of board policy has positioned the school to move forward on the path to be a viable option for the community.

There is an intake process that incorporates parent interviews, a sliding fee scale, and incorporates parental volunteerism and engagement as an essential component of the support that makes the school successful.

The long-term vision for the school is to continue to grow, eventually adding seventh and eighth grade to the program. Additionally, they would like to re-implement the Spanish immersion program, as well as expand staffing and scheduling.

Considerations

As the administrative team meets for their retreat, they begin to capture their hopes, dreams, and vision to develop a strategic plan to address day-to-day operations, funding and finance, staffing, curriculum and instructional implementation, and professional development. Consider an action plan tied to state requirements for accreditation, prioritize and establish a timeline for completion.

Continue to build capacity in curriculum and instruction through systemic professional development and evaluation of staff and programming. Consider using evidence-based practices and high quality instructional materials with fidelity.

Utilize the data that the school has and consider additional sources of achievement, attendance, enrollment, and climate data to impact student outcomes and communicate to stakeholders.

Develop a plan for growing the school by grade, and the financial impacts and level of need to sustain the current level of programming and continue to grow and support their long-range vision. Sustainability tied with financial support is a key element in assuring the schools viability and longevity in the community.

Increase awareness of new state requirements with being an accredited nonpublic school: hours, calendar, staffing, specials, open session board meetings. Consider an in-service with Iowa Department of Education, area education agency or other nonpublic accredited schools to discuss impacts and mechanics of the day-to-day operations.

Consider partnering with a "sister school" in a mentoring relationship to ensure that you have resources to navigate the multitude of decisions that are ahead and are able to navigate them effectively and efficiently. Take the time to "walk slowly" in order to run. It's a marathon, not a sprint.