

Inspire Accreditation Team Training #2- On-Site Team Visit

Segment 1: Team Visit Overview

Your time on campus during the team visit will focus on:

- Validating what the school has stated in their self-study
- Accomplish this through classroom observations, focus groups, interviews, and team discussion
- Purpose is to serve as an inspiration and encouragement to the school
- Visiting team members do not function as inspectors or compliance officers.

The team visit typically **begins late afternoon or evening of arrival day.**

- First evening often includes a tour of the school and interview with the governing body without school leaders
- May also include dinner with the governing body and school leadership, or team dinner on their own

On the **first and second full days** of the team visit:

- Team will conduct classroom visits and interviews
- Team will meet with groups of parents, students, and teachers from each division of the school, along with school leadership and non-instructional staff

Throughout the visit, the team will work collaboratively on the team report.

- Work on individual sections and should also review and edit sections other team members have written.
- By evening of the second full day, should be working to develop major commendations and accreditation action items.

On the **last day of the team visit**:

- Team finalizes the report, prepares for the exit meeting, and finalizes the ballot.

Note: As a guest of the school, be mindful of professional protocol. You will want to dress professionally, yet in a way that makes you appear approachable. Feel free to take note of anything you see that you would like to implement in your school, but do not ask to borrow anything until well after the visit.

Segment 2: Interviews

General Guidelines for Interviews:

- One of the key elements of accreditation is gaining input from all stakeholder groups in the overall improvement process of the school. The visiting team can help gather some of this feedback through interviews and observations.
- Prior to arrival, preview the general guidelines for interviews in the Chair and Team Handbook.
 - General introductory questions to utilize when meeting with focus groups (8-10 people) or individuals
- Any additional questions focused around the indicators and the school's prioritized goals
- The visiting team typically meets with the following groups:
 - **Governing body:** best if early in the visit; school leaders should not be in attendance
 - **School leaders:** can meet as a small group and then have individual meetings as needed
 - **Faculty:** all faculty included unless there is a faculty member who is a family member of a school leader or board member. If there is a faculty member who is a family member of a school leader or board member, schedule a time to meet with that faculty member separately so that they have input into the process.
 - **Non-instructional staff:** may be easiest to meet with these staff members individually
 - **Parents:** meet as division groups if possible (such as Early Education, Elementary, Middle and High)

- **Students:** meet as division groups if possible. When meeting with elementary students, it is best to limit participation to those in grade 3 and above. It is best to ask for descriptive words, or questions such as “What do you like best about chapel?” rather than questions that could have yes/no answers.
- The meetings with students and parents are conducted with representative groups, rather than all possible stakeholders. In international schools, the faculty meeting may also be with a representative group.

Special Note: Visiting team members should not use any type of recording device to record interviews.

Segment 3: Classroom Visits

Guidelines for Classroom Visits: Typically, there is some level of anxiety when teachers are anticipating these classroom visits, thinking that it is part of the school’s teacher evaluation process

- Remind teachers that you are visiting to gain a general sense of the overall instructional program and the culture of the school, NOT conducting individual classroom observations
- For smaller schools, may be able to visit each classroom. For larger schools, may observe a sampling of all grade levels and subject areas
- Generally take about 15- 20 minutes, and stay in the back of the room to be unobtrusive

Key elements to observe in classrooms include:

- Student engagement, instructional strategies, use of technology, support for learning, classroom management, teacher/student relationships, biblical integration, and assessments.
- While visiting classrooms, consider the following: Is the instruction engaging?
 - Are higher order thinking skills being applied?
 - Is a biblical worldview cultivated and integrated into the teaching?
 - How is technology being utilized to enhance the learning experience?
 - Is there evidence of support for those students who may require additional support for learning?
 - How does the teacher manage the classroom and address student behaviors?
- In addition to classroom visits, make general observations around the school. You should consider the following:
 - Are students happy?
 - Are there sub-groups within the school that are not being served well?
 - Are there safety or health concerns?

Segment 4: Evaluation of Documentation/Review of the Self-Study

Evaluate and validate what was documented in the self-study, paying attention to:

- **Instructional Program:** ensure that the school understands that “curriculum” refers to their written, guiding documents for instruction.
 - Should be well-documented with a written curriculum that contains the essential curricular elements mentioned in the Standards Manual, Appendix B.
 - Curriculum should be written for core subject areas as well as Bible classes for schools going through a visit the first time (while schools that are renewing accreditation are expected to have curriculum documentation for all subject areas). Bible classes should be held at the same frequency and with the same priority as other core subjects.
- **Stakeholder Feedback and Surveys:** goal is to affirm that the school gathers stakeholder feedback regularly (as opposed to just one time for the self-study), and that the school is actually analyzing that feedback and utilizing it for school improvement. (discussions during stakeholder focus group interviews will likely show this)
- **Assessments:** Through observations and interviews, validate how the assessments guide and support student learning.

Your role as a team member is to answer the question, “**Does your observation and evaluation of documentation affirm the school’s self-assessment?**” (If not, document areas of discrepancy to inform the development of Recommendations as well as Accreditation Action Items.)