



ACCREDITATION VISITATION GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS



2025-2026

CONTENTS

Getting Started	2
Purpose	2
Preparing for the Visitation	2
The School (Principal and Steering Committee Chairs)	2
Pre-visitation Conference/VIDEO Call	3
During The Visitation	4
Facility	4
Faculty and staff	4
Students	5
Parents	5
Pastor	5
Superintendent	5
End of the Visitation / Summary Report.....	5
Post Visitation	5
FCC Accreditation Office	5
Any Questions Before, During, or After the Visitation	6
Resources	7
Steering Committee Chairpersons/Principal Checklist	7
possible schedule – actual schedule set by visitation Chairperson	9
Possible Stakeholder Meeting Questions.....	10
Pastor	10
Administration	10
Parents	10
Students	10
Teachers.....	11
Individual staff members	11
File Checks.....	12
Handbooks/Website Review	13
points for classroom observations	14
Stipends and Travel Reimbursement.....	15

GETTING STARTED

The FCC Accreditation office collaborates with the Diocesan Schools Office to arrange the visitation. ***It is the school principal's responsibility to ensure that the CIPA (Continuous Improvement Process for Accreditation) work is completed.***

- Stage I – MVP and Domain work (forms, charts, and statements uploaded into School Forms)
- Stage II – Domain Committees work (Annual Report completed)
- Stage III – Action Plan and Summaries completed (uploaded into School Forms)

See the CIPA Guide for details. ***The principal must review benchmark ratings, comments, and evidence with the steering committee prior to submission. All website work is completed at least 6 weeks prior to the visitation.***

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Accreditation Visitation is to review the CIPA work and report back to the FCC accreditation office. These peer reviews are the heart of the accreditation process and another piece of continuous improvement. Within the scope of this review, the team determines if the process was followed, validates the school's compliance with the benchmarks, based on evidence, and evaluates the action plan. The visitation team gives the school and the FCC Accreditation Committee feedback on these issues. The visitation takes place over two school days. The team meets the evening prior to the visit and could take a tour of the school at that time.

PREPARING FOR THE VISITATION

THE SCHOOL (PRINCIPAL AND STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIRS)

- Reviews the Stage I forms and charts – uploaded in School Forms
 - Survey Results
 - Mission Vision and Philosophy work
 - Retreat Reflection Response Summary (page 14 of the CIPA Guide)
 - MVP Anchor Chart(s) (page 15 of the CIPA Guide)
 - MVP Statements (even if they have not changed)
 - Domain Anchor Charts (includes EEP and STREAM) (page 27 of the CIPA Guide)
- Reviews the Stage II Domain Committees work
 - Reports uploaded in School Forms
 - Data Review Summary (explained on page 30 of the CIPA Guide)
 - Domain Summary (page 33 of the CIPA Guide)
 - ARCA, EEP, Health & Safety Checklist and STREAM Benchmark Review
 - Collected evidence (electronic and hard copy) and comments for validation of the benchmarks
 - Ratings
 - An easy way to review everything in one place is to download the School Report (with evidence attachments) from the System Generated Reports in the Reports section of the School Profile

- Reviews the Stage III action plan work – uploaded in School Forms
 - Key Summary Points (page 39 of the CIPA Guide)
 - Action Plan (page 40 of the CIPA Guide)
 - School Profile (page 42 of the CIPA Guide)
- Submits to the superintendent the CIPA work **6 weeks** prior to the visitation
- Communicates with the superintendent to review the CIPA work and address any concerns
- Communicates with the chairperson to set the date of the pre-visitation conference call
- Budgets for the travel, lodging, meals, hospitality, and stipends of the visitation team (Mileage rate is 70¢/mile. Team member stipend is \$175; Chairperson stipend is \$350.)
- Makes lodging reservations for team members and consults with them regarding travel plans
 - Clean and safe hotel (Hilton, IHG, or Marriott brand hotels suggested)
 - Please have someone visit the hotel prior to booking to determine that it is safe and clean
 - A small welcome bag/basket is nice (water and snacks for the room)
- Sets up room for visitation team to use at the school (privacy is important)
 - Space to work
 - WIFI access
 - Water/beverages and snacks
 - Any hard copy evidence not uploaded
 - Extra paper, pens, post-its

PRE-VISITATION CONFERENCE/VIDEO CALL

The chairperson of the visitation team and the principal determine a time to discuss the upcoming visit. Points for discussion:

- Clarification on any CIPA materials
 - If more evidence is needed, it is requested
 - If there are concerns or questions about benchmark ratings, comments, reports, forms, etc. in Accreditrac, it is stated (these will be reviewed in detail during the visit)
- Facilities
 - Access throughout the facility – how will the team access rooms/buildings; keys/fobs; map with room numbers, grades, and teachers' names
 - Access on Day 1
 - Where to enter the parking lot; where to park
 - Where to enter the school (who will greet them)
 - If driver's license needed for name badge
 - A copy of the most recent risk management report for the facility; someone available to answer facility questions during the visit
- Visitation Schedule
 - Arrival day and time
 - It is a two-day visit, starting at the beginning of the school day on day one and ending after the exit report after school hours on day two (no early dismissal)
 - The team will meet the afternoon/evening before the visit takes place. They can do this at their hotel and a restaurant – it will be a working

- dinner. They can also do a quick tour of the school that afternoon/evening, if it works for the school personnel.
- When to meet with the pastor, staff (full staff after school both days; some individual staff members throughout the visit – the team will handle the individual meetings themselves), parents, students and for high school visits, any other staff with whom you want the team to meet
 - Anything on the school calendar that impacts the visit
 - Travel, lodging, and meals plan
 - The needs of each team member, when they are arriving and leaving
 - The meals that will be available at the school
 - The name and location of the hotel
 - When reimbursement forms need to be submitted
 - Technology use/need
 - Any school devices available
 - WIFI / internet access
 - Items needed
 - Map / Layout of the building(s) and grounds
 - Teachers' schedules; students' schedules
 - Staff list (with grade level and subject areas taught, certification, and catechist information)
 - Access to the buildings (keys, fobs)

DURING THE VISITATION

Prepare the school community for the site visit. This is the time to showcase the school!

FACILITY

- The building should be sparkling clean; the grounds well-kept
- Prominent Catholic identity throughout the campus
- Welcoming environment – everyone should know the names of the visitors
- Bulletin boards should be amazing and current
- Student work and projects displayed throughout the school and classrooms
- Decluttered classrooms

FACULTY AND STAFF

- Remind everyone of the purpose of the visitation
- Brief meeting with the visitation team before school on the first day to pray and introduce the team to the staff
- Meeting after school on the first day (give the possible questions ahead of time)
- Team observes in all classrooms
 - Give observation sheets to all teachers (located at the end of this handbook)
 - Lesson plans available
 - Best instructional days of the year (avoid testing, worksheets, and excessive teacher talk, as much as possible)
 - Short classroom visits, students and teacher do not need to greet the visitors
- Professional attire
- Exit report after school on the second day for the full staff
- Some staff will meet with the team individually – the team will handle this

STUDENTS

- Explain the purpose of the visitation
- Greet guests in the hallways
- In the classrooms, continue class as normal, no need to greet the visitors
- Give the possible questions ahead of time; team will select individual students on their own

PARENTS

- Explain the purpose of the visitation
- Give the possible questions ahead of time

PASTOR

- Explain the purpose of the visitation
- Invite him to be a part of the visit
 - Could attend the working lunch
 - Could attend the steering committee meeting toward the end of day two
 - Attend exit report
- Give him the possible questions ahead of time

SUPERINTENDENT

Discuss with the superintendent who from the office will be coming to the school and when (meeting with the visitation team; attend the meeting with the steering committee; attend the exit report, etc.)

END OF THE VISITATION / SUMMARY REPORT

The team members submit any receipts for travel, meals, and lodging. The school prepares reimbursement checks for these expenses along with the stipend for each team member. (Mileage rate is 70¢/mile. Team member stipend is \$175; Chairperson stipend is \$350. Team members and chairpersons do not have to complete W-9s, as they do not meet the \$600 threshold.)

POST VISITATION

FCC ACCREDITATION OFFICE

The FCC accreditation office staff will review the visitation materials and documentation, contacting the chairperson if there are questions. The visit is reviewed with the school's superintendent. At the end of each semester, the superintendents review all visits and approve accreditation status. Once approval and status is obtained, the school will receive notice and the new accreditation certificate. At that time the full work on Accreditrac will be available.

ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER THE VISITATION

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RESOURCES

STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS/PRINCIPAL CHECKLIST

Materials Ready

- Website work is complete
 - School Forms has all the appropriate documents
 - Survey Results
 - Retreat Reflection Response Summary
 - Mission Vision and Philosophy Anchor Charts
 - Mission Vision and Philosophy Statements
 - Domain Anchor Charts
 - Data Review Summary
 - Domain Summaries
 - Key Summary Points (from State III)
 - Action Plan
 - School Profile
 - Ratings complete for ARCA, EEP and Health & Safety Checklist (for schools with PK), STREAM benchmarks for STREAM certified schools
 - Evidence uploaded / linked
 - Comments written (professional)
 - Superintendent approval – discuss the work with the superintendent
- Any physical evidence is gathered
 - Placed in visitation team workroom (where appropriate, some files will be viewed in place by team)
 - Well labeled
- Visitation team member folders are filled
 - Map / layout of buildings and grounds
 - Staff list spreadsheet with appropriate information
 - Teacher schedules
 - Name tags
 - Visitor passes/keys/fobs

Lodging and Meals Ready

- Hotel rooms reserved (Hilton, IHG, Marriott properties suggested)
- Visit hotel to determine safety and cleanliness
- List of restaurant recommendations for dinner
- Breakfasts planned (on their own prior to coming to school; brought into school)
- Lunches brought into the school both days

Personnel Ready

- Meet with the pastor to review the visit protocol and determine where and when to meet with the team; Give him a copy of the possible questions
- Meet with the staff to review the visitation protocol, expectations, and schedule
- Select parents for meeting with the team: 4 to 6 parents with kids in various grades; Give them a copy of the possible questions
- Select students for meeting with the team: two students in each grade from five through twelve; Give them a copy of the possible questions

Hospitality / Site Ready

- Private workroom set up for the team to use
- A space for the team to put their things
- Technology is in place for the team to use; passwords available
- Refreshments in the room (water, light snacks)
- Directions on how to contact the office
- Welcome bag/basket at the hotel (water/beverage and snacks)

POSSIBLE SCHEDULE – ACTUAL SCHEDULE SET BY VISITATION CHAIRPERSON

Day Before the Site Visit

4 p.m. Team arrives at school; brief tour
Team checks in at the hotel
6 p.m. Team meetings and working dinner

Day 1

7:30 a.m. Team arrives at school (drive together from the hotel)
Meet with staff (introduction of team and prayer)
Team meeting
Meet with leadership
8:30 Classroom observations; review of evidence; individual meetings
10:30 Meet with pastor
11:00 Classroom observations; review of evidence; individual meetings
Noon Team work session and lunch
12:45 p.m. Meet with students
1:30 Classroom observations; review of evidence; individual meetings
2:30 Team work session
3:30 Meet with faculty and staff
4:30 Depart school
6:00 Team dinner and work session

Day 2

7:30 a.m. Arrive at school
Meet with parents
8:30 Team meeting
Classroom observations; review of evidence; individual meetings
10:30 Team work session
Noon Team work session and lunch
1 p.m. Meet with superintendent or designee
1:30 Meet with steering committee
Team work session
3:30 Exit report

POSSIBLE STAKEHOLDER MEETING QUESTIONS

These are questions the visitation team could ask. They might ask other questions, as well. They need to be able to validate the benchmarks and understand the school from various stakeholder perceptions.

PASTOR

- How long have you been at this parish?
- What is your involvement with the school?
- What makes this a Catholic school?
- How and when do you interact with the principal?
- When you think of your school, what one word comes to mind?

ADMINISTRATION

- Why did you choose to work here and/or why do you continue to choose to work here?
- How do you (personally) use the mission statement?
- What is the vision for the school?
- How are faculty and staff supported?
- How are parents supported?
- How is faith integrated into the life of the school?
- How does the administration use data?
- If you could change anything at all about the school, what would that be?
- When you think of your school, what one word comes to mind?

PARENTS

- Why did you choose this school and/or why do you continue to choose this school?
- What do you know about the mission of the school? Vision? Philosophy of Education?
- What makes this school Catholic?
- How are you supported as a parent?
- How do you know what is happening in the classrooms? In the school overall?
- If you could change anything at all about the school, what would that be?
When you think of your school, what one word comes to mind?

STUDENTS

- What makes this a Catholic school?

- If you had a friend that didn't attend this school, what would you tell them is the best reason they should attend?
- What do you know about the mission statement?
- What do your teachers do when you don't understand something?
- Describe how you use technology at school.
- Do you ever work with other students during class? (Have them expand on this: when, how, why, etc.)
- If you could change anything at all about the school, what would that be?
- When you think of your school, what one word comes to mind?

TEACHERS

- Why did you choose to work here and/or why do you continue to choose to work here?
- What makes this a Catholic school?
- How do you integrate the faith into What curriculum standards are used? How are they used?
- What data is used? How is it used?
- How do you collaborate as a faculty? As a school community?
- How are you supported professionally? Spiritually?
- If you could change anything at all about the school, what would that be?
- When you think of your school, what one word comes to mind?

INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBERS

- How were you involved in the self-study and accreditation process?
- What is the best thing about your school?
- What would you change about your school?
- What one word describes your school?

FILE CHECKS

If the diocese completed a file check for staff and students, within the school year, then the visitation team will check a random sampling. Otherwise, they will review all staff files and review at least 5 student files in each grade level.

Each personnel file should include at least

- Application
- Employment history check (of all previous employers)
- Level 2 background screening documentation
- College Transcript
- Certificate
- BEC-PASS documentation
- Professional Practices documentation
- Disqualification List documentation, if hired after June 1, 2022
- Catechist certificate/documentation
- Ethics training documentation
- Safe environment training certificate/documentation
- Signed receipt of the staff handbook

Students

- Health files should include at least
 - DH 3040 form (health examination)
 - DH 680 form (immunization)
 - Grade six – scoliosis screening completed
- Cumulative files should include at least
 - Data: full name, birth date, address, parents' names, last school attended (name and location), date enrolled, date withdrew, graduation date
 - Copy of birth certificate
 - Attendance information for each year – number of days present and absent
 - Quarterly report cards and progress reports
 - Standardized test results

HANDBOOKS/WEBSITE REVIEW

- Postings in the school
 - Duty to report abuse immediately, immunity from liability, duty to comply with investigations, include hotline number
 - Policies and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct of school personnel
 - This includes the two 11x17 posters for students and the posters for staff
- Website (or provide in written format)
 - Programs
 - Services
 - Qualification of all classroom teachers
 - Policies and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct of school personnel
- Handbooks
 - Parent
 - Anti-discrimination statement that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin
 - Explanation or description of programs, services, and qualifications of all classroom teachers
 - Description of how the school will communicate student progress on a quarterly basis
 - Policies and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct of school personnel
 - Staff
 - Fingerprinting and background screening requirements and results disqualifying the person from employment
 - Statement regarding the prohibiting of confidentiality agreements with personnel who end employment due to misconduct
 - Anti-discrimination statement that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin
 - Duty to report abuse immediately, immunity from liability, duty to comply with investigations, include hotline number
 - Policies and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct of school personnel

POINTS FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

1. School Name
2. Teacher observed
3. Grade level observed
4. Subject(s) observed
5. The mission statement is highly visible (1.4): Not observed; Had to search for the mission statement, but found it; Noticed the mission statement while scanning the room; Mission statement is very prominent
6. Catholic culture is visible in the form of symbols (crucifix, statues, sacramentals, etc.) (2.6): Not observed; There is a crucifix, but had to search for any other symbols; This classroom could only exist in a Catholic school; The Catholic faith is integrated throughout the classroom display

The following observation points will be rated as not observed, partially evident (less than half of the students), evident (at least half of the students), or very evident (almost all of the students):

7. Students experience religion or Catholic identity in all classes/subjects (7.2)
8. Students are involved in a rigorous curriculum (2.4 and 7.1)
9. Students are active participants in their learning and assessment (2.4 and 7.1)
10. Students have opportunities for reflection (7.3)
11. Students are asked about their individual progress/learning/understanding or students demonstrate/verbalize their understanding (7.3)
12. Students have the opportunity to revise or improve their work (7.3)
13. Students use technology and digital tools to communicate or work collaboratively (7.4)
14. Students use technology and digital tools to create or publish or and/or complete/submit assignments (7.4)
15. Students use technology and digital tools to gather, evaluate, critique, and/or use information or to research (7.4)
16. Students demonstrate curiosity or have the opportunity to be imaginative or analyze information (7.5)
17. Students listen with understanding and are persistent (stick with the task at hand) (7.5)
18. Students communicate with clarity and precision (7.5)
19. Students are provided additional/alternative instruction at appropriate level of challenge (7.6)
20. Students have a choice in their learning (7.6)
21. Students participate in projects or have the opportunity to work with others (7.6)
22. Exit maps are prominent and well-marked (14.4)
23. Students could quickly and easily evacuate the classroom (safe clutter free floors) (14.4)
24. Optional comments or notes
25. Date and Time of the observation
26. Name of the Observer

(This tool can be put into the school's Survey Monkey account for the school's use, if desired.)

STIPENDS AND TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

The school reimburses the visitation team members for any travel and lodging expenses incurred. The automobile mileage reimbursement rate is \$0.70/mile. Airline flight mileage reimbursement is available if it is a more reasonable way to travel. The school gives each team member an honorarium of \$175 and the chairperson \$350. Each team member completes a voucher form during the visitation and the school gives them a check before they leave. (Team members and chairpersons do not have to complete W-9s, as they do not meet the \$600 threshold.)

Florida Catholic Conference Voucher Form for Visitation Chairperson and Team Members

NAME _____

DATE _____

SCHOOL VISITED _____

TRAVEL

CAR _____ (total miles traveled)

PLANE _____

MEALS _____ (Submit receipts)

HONORARIUM (In addition to reimbursement for travel, lodging, and meals, the school provides an honorarium to each team member as follows.)

Chairperson: \$350.00

Team Member: \$175.00

(Signature of Team Member)