

International School Anti-Discrimination Taskforce (ISADTF)

Accreditation Committee Guidance Document

2023

Co-Facilitators:

Nunana Nyomi, Secondary School Principal – Campus des Nations
International School of Geneva (Ecolint)

Kevin Simpson, Founder, KDSL Global
and Founder, The Association of International Educators and Leaders of Color (AIELOC)



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION TASK FORCE



Accreditation Committee Contributors:

Salima Dinani
Marwa Elgerzery
Habib Alhassan
Ben Thrash
Dr. Danau Tanu
Trapti Trivedi
Farouq R Hamdan
Trillium Hibbeln
Jane Larsson
Christine Ishii
Sherri Spelic
Anna Reynolds
Kristina Pennell-Götze
Bonnie Ricci
Margaret Alvarez
Meredith Klein
Victoria Pugh

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Recommendations for Accreditation

Preamble

In October 2022, a group of international school leaders, leaders of accreditation organizations, representatives from international education organizations, educators, and current international school students and alumni gathered in Geneva, Switzerland for the inaugural meeting of the International School Anti-Discrimination Taskforce (ISADTF). Several areas of impact were identified to eliminate discrimination from the international school ecosystem. These include governance, leadership, recruitment of staff, curriculum, agency (including student agency), and accreditation. Working groups were formed around these areas and they have identified necessary actions to nurture inclusive school communities free from discrimination. This document shares the recommendations from the accreditation working group.

The working group identified three main recommendations to better leverage accreditation as a vehicle for proactive change in eliminating discrimination:

1. **Accreditation agencies to provide guidance and training for schools to make the process more inclusive**

Objective: Help school communities make a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging (DEIJB) through an inclusive and aspirational accreditation process

2. **Build Diversity and Capacity of Accreditation Staff and Volunteers to assess DEIJB**

Objective: Diversify the pool of accreditation team evaluators and strengthen their ability to assess DEIJB

3. **Accreditation agencies to strengthen DEIJB expectations within accreditation standards for school communities**

Objective: Every accreditation agency has clearly defined anti-discrimination standards which school communities can commit/aspire to achieve

We, the members of the ISADTF accreditation working group, call upon international school accreditation agencies to adopt these recommendations. Furthermore, we recommend and invite accreditation agencies to enter a consultative process with the ISADTF as they strengthen and develop standards, indicators, and practices.

Recommendation #1: Accreditation agencies to provide guidance and training for schools to make the process more inclusive

Although most accreditation processes are designed with the intention of being a whole-school, inclusive process, school leaders take on a prominent role in fostering or blocking community engagement in the self-study process, community survey, and during the team evaluation. The positionality of leaders and the prominence of accreditation in the importance of the school can create a less inclusive and fearful climate that stifles authenticity. Therefore, there is a need for better training of school leaders and school communities on effective and inclusive processes.

To help school communities make a commitment to DEIJB and anti-discrimination through an inclusive and aspirational accreditation process, we have identified the following actions:

- Clarify and develop guidance on how school communities can engage in the accreditation process to achieve the goal of full inclusion and transparency.
 - Review current guidelines and provide explicit guidance to schools as they undertake the process (appointing an accreditation coordinator; forming a self-study team; identifying those who meet with the visiting team).
 - Strengthen preparatory visit workshop training to set forth how to engage the school community in the accreditation process.
- De-center leadership in the process: clearly define and broaden who can lead the process, distributing leadership for the process to make it accessible across the community; move from compliance to commitment by reducing fear in the process.
 - Students and parents serve on self-study committees and fully participate in the community survey (help them understand how they can be part of the process in a meaningful way); student presentations/students lead tours for the visiting team.
- Help schools fulfill DEIJB responsibilities within their school context.
 - Review and develop community survey questions to help school communities explore demographic data and to probe perceptions of inclusion and belonging
 - Develop guidance and recommendations on the DEIJB function/responsibilities in school communities according to their context
 - Develop case studies and role profiles.

Recommendation #2: Build Diversity and Capacity of Accreditation Staff and Volunteers to assess DEIJB

Most accreditation organizations and volunteer teams are a reflection of the international school ecosystem which is predominantly white and western ([Diversity Collaborative](#), 2021). As accreditation is typically a peer-review process, this potential homogeneity can lead to groupthink and, without proper training, the experiences of less represented groups can be overlooked. Therefore, it is critical for accreditation agencies to build the diversity and capacity of their staff and volunteers to assess DEIJB.

In order to diversify the pool of accreditation team evaluators and strengthen their ability to assess DEIJB practices, we have identified the following actions:

- Actively identify and recruit more diverse educators for volunteer evaluator training; remove barriers (e.g. training fees)
- Encourage schools to provide release time for staff to volunteer on teams (planning and budgeting)
- Develop evaluator training to include skills and competences related to embracing and valuing DEIJB.
- Work with DEIJB experts to develop training modules for evaluators and accreditation staff.

Recommendation #3: Accreditation agencies to strengthen DEIJB expectations within accreditation standards for school communities

One of the most influential levers for change accreditation agencies possess are the ability to define standards and indicators to emphasize certain core practices that are essential for all schools. To eliminate discrimination within schools, it is necessary for clear standards to be in place within accreditation protocols.

We have identified the following actions which every accreditation agency should take to ensure that they have clearly defined anti-discrimination standards which school communities can commit to achieve:

- Strengthen and clearly define standards and indicators to focus more explicitly on DEIJB and anti-discrimination. Standards to explicitly mention:
 - The role and responsibilities of a DEIJB lead
 - The need for regular DEIJB competency training for all staff at the school
- Adopt core standards relative to DEIJB and anti-discrimination across all school accreditation agencies.
- Review, reflect, expand, and evaluate current standards related to safeguarding/well-being to specifically include references to DEIJB and anti-discrimination.
- Accreditation agencies to use the ISADTF to provide consultative input and feedback to these organizations as they develop standards and indicators.

A bright future

We envisage a future where accreditation is an integral part of eliminating discrimination in the international school ecosystem. As school communities see accreditation as a transparent process that is truly inclusive and free from fear, individuals will participate authentically and schools will grow in their ability to identify opportunities to be more inclusive and equitable. More diverse and better trained accreditation staff and volunteers would be more able to support school communities in serving marginalized groups. Stronger accreditation standards will usher in key structural changes to ensure that schools are safe spaces where all forms of identity can thrive, free from discrimination. Accreditation agencies have a responsibility to act now by adopting these recommendations to secure the bright future we hope to see where our schools can live up to their ideals for global citizenship, international mindedness, and collaboration across the myriad differences and identities among the individuals they serve.