

# National Panel Launches Review Process For Private School Accrediting Groups

By Millicent Lawton

A national panel that will review the standards and procedures of associations that accredit private elementary and secondary schools has launched its inaugural accreditation-review process.

Since its inception about two years ago as a "working group," the Washington-based National Council for Private School Accreditation has aimed to create or become an entity that could bestow a "seal of approval" on accreditation programs that merited it. (See *Education Week*, Nov. 4, 1992.)

Formal recognition by the council is meant to be comparable to that given by the six regional associations that certify schools and colleges. John Sloops, the executive director of the elementary school commission of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, is one of the new council's four at-large members.

The others are Terrel H. Bell, a former U.S. Secretary of Education; Marie Della Bella, an education consultant to the Connecticut Department of Education; and Thomas Read, the president emeritus of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States.

## Charter Members Apply

The accreditation process got under way this month as several private school associations that are among the council's charter members applied for full membership.

As it would with any future applicants, the council's Commission on Standards and Review will make a recommendation after evaluating each program's standards and conducting site visits.

The first applicants are the Association of Christian Schools International, the Association of Independent Schools of Florida, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the International

Christian Accrediting Association, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the National Independent Private Schools Association.

While evaluating charter members could be problematic, "nobody's going to get in because that organization is a charter member," said Charles J. Malley, the executive director of the council.

The council, which state officials and others have praised, seems to fill a need.

Rabbi Nachum Kaplan, an education consultant to the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, said his 500-school group recently formed its first accreditation commission because of the recognition now possible through the council.

"Once people recognize the degree to which they're going to be honest and thorough," Rabbi Kaplan said, "their stamp of approval, so to speak, will be as sought-after as an approval of an agency like Middle States."

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