Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools, and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. The accreditation process is also known in terms of its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education. Accreditation is inextricably linked to institution and system improvement. The accreditation process asks institutions and systems to critically evaluate their vision, strategies, priorities, leadership, programs, student performance, and resources. The process of earning and maintaining accreditation provides institutions and educational systems with clear and compelling direction for implementing changes to move toward excellence.

The process of accreditation yields the greatest continuing return for institutions. The institutions, guided by a set of rigorous research-based quality standards, continuously assesses their status.

While accreditation is officially a "set of rigorous protocols and research-based processes for evaluating an institution's organizational effectiveness," it is far more than that. Today, accreditation examines the whole institution—the programs, student performance, the cultural context, the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of students.

Most schools in the U.S. are accredited by regional accrediting agencies. There are six major accreditation agencies for public and private schools as well as a national accrediting body for private and Christian schools—The National Association of Private Schools.

Some states also have their own accreditation standards and may also have bodies that specifically accredit private or independent high schools (e.g. The Texas Alliance of Accredited Private Schools).
Cognia is the parent organization of three of the six major accreditation agencies.

The three accreditation agencies of Cognia are:

**North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI)**
North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), click for more on states…Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS), Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Navajo Nation, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

**Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC)**
NWAC is now an accreditation division of Cognia, expanding our capacity and resources to deliver accreditation and school improvement services to our accredited institutions.

**Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Councils on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI)**
Alabama, Department of Defense Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS), Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Latin America is the accreditation agency for all DoDEA schools.

The other regional school accreditation agencies in the U.S. are:

**Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA)**
Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Central America, Europe, and the Middle East,

**New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)**
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and

**Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)**
California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Palau, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, and other Australasian locations.