



## Guidelines for Writing the Five-Year Progress Review

### Overview

Five years after a decennial evaluation, NYS AIS requires each accredited school to prepare a report according to the details outlined below. The completed report should be submitted to NYS AIS and to the appointed visiting committee members six-weeks before the on-site visit. The visiting committee, consisting of two to four members, will not attempt a decennial evaluation, but rather an evaluation of progress the school has made since the last decennial visit.

The five-year review is a procedure that can, under normal circumstances, be addressed at the administrative and governance levels. As such, visiting committee members will speak with the head of school, the board chair and other trustees, and members of the school's administration, including the financial officer(s). There may be occasions when other constituents from the school community should be involved. The process is meant to be reflective and analytical, yet more limited than the decennial review.

### Compiling the Various Aspects of the Report

The school is expected to prepare a concise report, generally no more than 40 pages in length, which includes:

- I. Introduction and Overview
  - the school's mission statement.
  - a brief description of the school – size of student body, number of faculty, location, a sentence or two regarding the culture of the school.
  - *substantive* changes that have taken place in the school in the five years following the decennial evaluation, particularly in the areas of enrollment, finance, administration, governance or curriculum. If relevant, include commentary informed by any subsequent reports stipulated by the Commission following the last decennial visit.
  - an analysis of the school's current financial position.
- II. Response to the Major Recommendations
  - a thorough response to the *major recommendations* found in the Conclusion of the Decennial Committee's report.
- III. Governance
  - a comprehensive, analytical narrative response to the Governance questions, prompts and criteria found at the end of this document. Complete the NYS AIS Governance Criteria Ratings and respond to the guiding questions.
  - an analysis of Board members' self-assessment and make available the survey for the Committee review and completed conflict of interest forms.
- IV. Additional Reflections
  - an update on any *Criteria for Membership with a 3 or lower rating* by either the school or the visiting committee.
  - A brief summary response to the secondary recommendations from the decennial report not covered by the Governance, Finance or Major Recommendation sections. Any recommendations appearing more than once in the decennial report necessitate only one response. To facilitate the visiting committee's work, the order

of this portion of the five-year report should reflect the order of the Decennial Committee's report.

- the five-year accreditation data report generated in DASL.
- V. Next Steps
- *the main challenges* the school is facing in the next five years and any *future initiatives, projects and improvements* that the school is currently proposing or planning to undertake.

### **The Financial Aspects of the Report**

The school is expected to make available the following items:

1. the audit from the year of and years following the most recent decennial visit, completed by an outside, independent auditor
2. the corresponding financial management letters commenting on internal controls
3. the school's short, and long-term, financial plan
4. the school's balance sheet, including the most recent P & L statement.

### **Preparing for the Visit**

*At least three months prior to the visit*, NYSAIS will send a reminder letter and the committee roster.

*At least two months before the visit*, the chair will confer with the head regarding the schedule for the visit (see suggested schedule below), members of the board of trustees with whom the committee will want to meet, special areas or considerations to observe, and additional documents, if any, that might be required.

The final report should be in either **12 Pt-Times New Roman** or **Arial** font, with a table of contents and sequentially numbered pages.

The school should arrange for the committee to have a private workroom that includes Internet access.

No later than six weeks before the on-site visit:

*A. Send to ALL MEMBERS of the Visiting Committee:*

- a. A letter of welcome that incorporates information about travel and lodging, the school's dress code, and a contact person for committee members who may have any questions. Include an inquiry about dietary restrictions.
- b. The five-year report, including the rated Criteria for Accreditation for Governance, and the DASL Five-Year Accreditation Data Report.

*B. Send to the Chair and Finance Member:*

- a. the audit from the year of and years following the most recent decennial visit, completed by an outside, independent auditor
- b. the corresponding financial management letters commenting on internal controls
- c. the school's short, and long-term, financial plan
- d. the school's balance sheet, including the most recent P & L statement.
- e. a copy of the current by-laws of the governing body.
- f. a copy of the governing body's most recent self-assessment (a sample assessment

tool is available from NYS AIS). (NOTE: The individual evaluations by each member of the governing body should be available upon request).

g. copies of current strategic or long-range planning documents.

C. Send to your NYS AIS Associate Director at either [george@nysais.org](mailto:george@nysais.org) or [judith@nysais.org](mailto:judith@nysais.org).

a. A digital copy of the self-study report including the rated Criteria for Accreditation for Governance, and the DASL Five-Year Accreditation Data Report.

#### 2 weeks prior to the arrival of the visiting committee

- Confirm the schedule with the visiting committee chair
- Make final arrangements for computers, printers, accommodations for projection, and tech support.
- Finalize plans for transporting, feeding, and housing the visiting committee.

#### During the Visit

The following is a suggested work schedule. The on-site visit will begin at *noon* on the first day, and be completed by the end of school on the second day.

### **Suggested Schedule**

#### Day One

12:00 - 12:45	Committee arrives, and has lunch together while finalizing its schedule
12:45 - 1:30	Committee meets with head of school
1:30 - 2:00	Committee meets with staff member(s) in charge of the report
2:00 - 3:30	Committee meets with various members of the staff regarding responses to the major recommendations from the decennial report
3:30 - 4:30	Break with refreshments in committee room
4:30 - 5:30	Committee meets with members of the governing body
5:30 - 7:30	Committee eats dinner and summarizes, plans for the next day, and adjourns for the evening.

#### Day Two

8:00 - 11:30	Committee meets with various members of the staff, including those responsible for curriculum, communications, student services, finance, advancement and admissions
11:30 - 12:30	Lunch with members of the school community as the visiting committee deems appropriate
12:30 - 3:30	Committee convenes to complete the report

## **Following the Visit**

The chair will submit expense vouchers for each of the members of the committee. The school should reimburse the members and chair directly by check. Refer any questions about the amounts claimed to NYSAIS.

The chair will send the committee's report to NYSAIS, and NYSAIS will in turn forward the report to the head of school for her/his comments on the accuracy of the committee's assessment. *All correspondence regarding the visit and the report is to be directed through the NYSAIS office.*

At its next meeting held in mid January or late May, the Commission on Accreditation will consider both the school's and the committee's reports, consult with the chair, append any recommendations it deems appropriate, and authorize release of the committee's report to the school. The Commission may extend accreditation for a full five years or for a shorter period, or it may require the school to satisfy certain conditions before accreditation is extended. Any recommendation to terminate accreditation will be presented to the NYSAIS Board of Trustees for their consideration and determination. Once finalized, the school will receive notification from NYSAIS regarding its terms of accreditation.

## **Questions? Contact:**

George Swain email: [george@nysais.org](mailto:george@nysais.org), direct phone: 845-750-2501

or

Judith Sheridan email: [judith@nysais.org](mailto:judith@nysais.org), direct phone: 917-301-2606

## Governance Section

The school's governance is led by a deliberative group with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that are key to the sustainability of the school. The governing body attends to new policy and changes in existing policy, all within the spirit of the mission of the school, and consistently exercises its fiduciary responsibility while delegating the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of school.

### NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation

#### Baseline Criteria

*These criteria are rated by both the school and the visiting committee with a "yes" or a "no."*

- B-3.1 The governing body ensures administrative follow up as a result of an outside, annual professional audit and the corresponding management letter.
- B-3.2 The governing body reviews and maintains appropriate by-laws that conform to legal requirements while assuring that the school and governing body operate in compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations, including civil rights and anti-discrimination requirements.
- B-3.3 The governing body creates a conflict of interest policy that is reviewed annually with, and signed by, individual trustees.
- B-3.4 The governing body keeps full and accurate records of its meetings, committees, and policies.
- B-3.5 The governing body ensures the confidentiality of all conversations.

#### Strategic Criteria

*These criteria are rated by both the school and the visiting committee on a scale of one to six.*

- S-3.1 The roles and responsibilities of the governing body are clearly defined, transparent, and communicated to all constituents.
- S-3.2 The decisions of the governing body are effectively communicated to the appropriate constituents.
- S-3.3 The members of the governing body recognize and fulfill their responsibility as stewards of the mission.
- S-3.4 The governing body undertakes effective strategic planning for the school.

- S-3.5 The governing body provides stability in transitions of leadership for itself and its head of school.
- S-3.6 The governing body ensures that the head of school receives appropriate support, evaluation, and compensation.
- S-3.7 The governing body ensures that financial resources are provided for the school.
- S-3.8 The governing body has appropriate policies to support the creation, review, and approval of an annual operating and capital budget as well as a multi-year financial plan.
- S-3.9 The governing body understands its central role in institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
- S-3.10 The governing body is responsible for establishing broad school policies and appropriately delegates responsibility for the operations of the school to the head of school.
- S-3.11 Members of the governing body focus on the strategic interests and needs of the school in fulfilling their responsibilities.
- S-3.12 The governing body participates in an effective program of board development that includes annual new trustee orientation, ongoing trustee education, evaluation and self-evaluation, and board leadership succession planning.
- S-3.13 The governing body establishes policies that reflect diversity and cultural competency and ensures that these qualities are reflected in decision-making and governing body membership.
- S-3.14 The governing body ensures that the school has in place adequate provisions for risk assessment and management, including the transfer of risk through appropriate insurance coverage.

## Questions and Information to Guide the Five-Year Report

Your school's response should include full consideration of the questions and prompts. Provide an analytical narrative.

1. Describe and assess the organizational structure of the governing body, the members' roles and responsibilities (including any other affiliations or organizations that have oversight of the school, such as a church or university).
  - a. Assess the effectiveness of the governing body's organization and committee or task force structure. How well does this structure meet your school's needs? Is there a need for a modification of practice?
  - b. When the governing body is responsible for organizations other than the school, include an organizational chart that illustrates the supervisory relationships. Describe how school needs are prioritized.
2. How does the governing body communicate its role and responsibilities, work, and strategic initiatives to the various constituencies of the school? Include the role of digital technology in this assessment and determine the effectiveness of all forms of communication.
3. Describe and assess the effectiveness of orientation for new members of the governing body in promoting the mission of the school and in defining roles and responsibilities.
  - a. How well does your program of board orientation and training meet the needs of board members as well as the needs of the board?
  - b. Assess the effectiveness of the board's overall development program including annual review, self-evaluation, ongoing trustee education, evaluation and self-evaluation.
  - c. Are any changes planned or necessary?
4. How does the board develop strategic initiatives or undertake strategic planning?
  - a. In planning for the school's future, how does the board use comparison and benchmarking data to make decisions? Provide an example of a recent decision that was informed by an analytical data review.
  - b. Provide a recent example of how a strategic initiative was identified, prioritized, and implemented. Assess the process.
5. Describe the process used for leadership succession within the board and for the head of school.
  - a. How is board leadership cultivated, recruited and supported?
  - b. Describe either the process used to recruit the head of school, a plan for leadership succession, or how such a plan would be developed.
  - c. What is in place to ensure a diverse pool of candidates for both the board of trustees and the school's leadership?
6. How does the governing body support the head of school including the relationship between the head of school and the board chair? Analyze the effectiveness of this support.
  - a. Describe and assess the process and effectiveness of the evaluation of the head of school.
  - b. How is compensation determined for the head of school?

- c. Describe assess the process for contract/letter of agreement renewal for the head of school.
7. Describe and assess the processes in place by which the financial resources of the school are determined.
  - a. What information and data are used to inform financial decision-making?
  - b. Does the board create and use dashboards to inform decision-making? Why or why not? Are these effective?
8. How are board members are introduced to their role and responsibilities regarding institutional advancement and fundraising? Give an example of how priorities and fundraising goals are developed and assess the board's effectiveness in achieving the desired outcome.
9. Assess the clarity with which the board understands the role of governance distinct from that of the school's administrative responsibilities.
  - a. Provide examples when the board and administration have acted in ways that demonstrate the distinction between governance and administrative responsibilities.
10. Provide an example of decision-making that considered gender, diversity, and/or cultural competency.
11. Assess the program for risk management in effect for the physical assets of the school, liability of all kinds, and any other insurance purchased or provided by the school.
12. How does the board review its own performance?
  - a. How are trustees advised of concerns regarding their performance?
  - b. What is the process of internal control and advisement?
  - a. How are problems or issues with specific trustees addressed by the board, whether through committee work, through the chair or via their own governance subcommittee?

## **STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH, AND CHANGES UNDER CONSIDERATION**

1. What are the major strengths and opportunities for growth in the areas under review in the Governance section, what areas of change is the school considering and how will they be undertaken?

**Documents to be provided TO THE CHAIR with the self-study report six weeks ahead of the visit**

- A copy of the current by-laws of the governing body.
- A copy of the governing body's most recent self-assessment (a sample assessment tool is available from NYSAIS). (NOTE: The individual evaluations by each member of the governing body should be available upon request).
- Copies of current strategic or long-range planning documents.

**Documents to be provided ON SITE, preferably in DIGITAL format**

**NOTE: When appropriate, all documents will be kept confidential and treated on a need-to-know basis.**

- A list of all members of the governing body including terms of service, length of time each member has served on the governing body, leadership roles (e.g. chair, treasurer, etc.) and remaining time of service for each member of the governing body.
- Copy of the original Charter of Articles of Incorporation and as amended.
- Policies regarding the evaluation, renewal, compensation, and support of the head of school.
- A list of all governing body committees including the purpose of the committees, the membership on the committees, and length of service of each member on the committees.
- A copy of the most recent conflict of interest statements for each member of the governing body.
- All financial oversight policies such as investment, audit, budget-to-actuals, etc.
- Board agendas and board minutes for the past two years.