



# Manual for Evaluation and Accreditation

For NYS AIS Accreditation visits during the  
2023-2024 school year.

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**Version 4.3**

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## **Dedication**

This current version of the NYS AIS Manual for Accreditation 4.3 is dedicated to our departing Executive Director, Dr. Mark W. Lauria whose enduring commitment to continuous improvement will be felt by independent schools throughout New York State and beyond for many years to come. Under his thoughtful leadership, along with the NYS AIS Commission on Accreditation, the NYS AIS accreditation process continues to provide a vital link for schools as they aspire to become exemplary learning environments for their students and families. Mark is fond of saying that leadership “creates the conditions under which others may do their best work,” which may also be said of the accreditation process itself. In that spirit, Mark is a true leader who has inspired countless others to do their best work on behalf of the students, teachers, and parents in our dynamic school community.

## **Preface to the Manual 4.3 Edition**

This revision to the NYS AIS Manual for Accreditation includes several new and revised criteria for accreditation in the areas of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) following an extensive review of the instruments used by schools to undertake the comprehensive self-study by the NYS AIS Commission on Accreditation and Board of Trustees with support from members of the NYS AIS Diversity Committee. In addition to revised criteria, Manual 4.3 also includes additional guiding questions as well as a glossary of important terms related to school evaluation. It is our hope that schools and visiting committees will find these revised instruments helpful in their work.

The New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYS AIS) is authorized by the New York State Board of Regents to accredit early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools. NYS AIS derives its authority from the Board of Regents through its charter, which states that the Association is authorized “to evaluate and accredit nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools operating within the State of New York and, as concerns New York corporations with branches in other states and countries, to evaluate and accredit those consistent with the laws, rules and regulations of host states and countries.” The NYS AIS accreditation function operates through its accrediting arm, the Commission on Accreditation, which has the responsibility for establishing the criteria for accreditation, creating evaluative materials, and recommending accreditation of member schools to the NYS AIS Board of Trustees.

NYS AIS began evaluating its members’ elementary schools in 1969, using a manual developed by a committee of heads of school. Several years later, NYS AIS schools asked the Association to extend the accreditation process to high schools. During the early years of accreditation, NYS AIS used, together with its own criteria and supplements, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) manual. For this early assistance, NYS AIS is grateful to its New England neighbor for helping it establish a strong accreditation process and train a generation of independent school teachers and administrators in the careful preparation of the school’s self-study, which is the crucial foundation of peer evaluation and accreditation.

The philosophy that drives the evaluative process that NYS AIS and other state and regional organizations have adopted and perfected over the years arises from the belief that each independent school is unique and, providing it meets certain basic criteria, deserves to be evaluated in terms of its own mission. As NYS AIS expects its member schools to undergo periodic reflection regularly, it seems appropriate that NYS AIS itself should do the same with respect to its history while maintaining a vision for the future. In addition to relying on broad NYS AIS membership participation and guidance, the

standards created by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA) form the foundation for many NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation.

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Finally, where appropriate, the NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation have been used to formulate the NYS AIS Principles of Best Practice for all member schools. This unified approach to accreditation and best practices provides harmony between these documents resulting in clear guidance to member schools. We are indebted to all those, past and present, who have been associated with the NYS AIS accreditation process.

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June 2022

## Introduction

NYSAIS serves its members in many ways, not the least of which is to administer a process of evaluation and accreditation. The key element in this kind of accreditation is to involve its members in a process of self-evaluation. If this process is undertaken conscientiously and insightfully, it can reflect the past, the present, and a look into the future through a critical analysis of all aspects of the school resulting in an informed sense of strategic goals for the future. As such, accreditation attests to a school's quality in terms everyone readily understands. To say that a school is accredited is to say that it has met many tests without having to explain at length the nature of those tests. Accreditation attests to a school's quality by first applying the viewpoint of the school's mission and culture. Additionally, to say that a school is accredited is to say that it has been held accountable by an assessment based on a unified standard of excellence reflecting best practices. NYSAIS is a member of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA), an organization of over 20 independent school accrediting bodies, that seeks to refine and improve the work of its member associations through a process of continuous self and peer assessment.

## Benefits of Accreditation

### **A regular NYSAIS assessment:**

- provides critical analysis to guide a school for improving its practices and for planning strategic initiatives in its next five years.
- allows a school to demonstrate and validate its achievement in fulfilling its mission and educational objectives.
- satisfies a basic requirement for membership in both NYSAIS and NAIS.
- supports protection against over involvement by state and federal governmental agencies in the operations of independent schools.
- provides a credential that is essential in much corporate and foundation fundraising.
- facilitates school and college admission, transfers, and admission of international students.
- strengthens the voice of NYSAIS in speaking collectively for the interests of independent schools.

### **The evaluation and accreditation cycle includes:**

- a written self-study report developed by the school through an inclusive community-wide process that centers on the school's mission and is based on the format and topics to be found in this Manual.
- an on-site visit by a committee of independent school peers who will, during a four-day stay (typically Sunday afternoon through Wednesday afternoon), review the materials that the school has prepared, visit classes, observe activities, and talk with students, teachers, administrators, non-teaching personnel, parents/guardians, and trustees.
- verification of the self-study report by the visiting committee as well as a determination of the extent to which the school meets the NYSAIS Criteria for Accreditation.
- a submission by NYSAIS of both the school's self-study report and the visiting committee's report to the NYSAIS Commission on Accreditation, which recommends the terms of accreditation to the NYSAIS Board of Trustees.
- a determination of accreditation by the NYSAIS Board of Trustees, notification of terms (not to exceed five years) and release of the visiting committee's report to the school.
- the implementation of the school's own and visiting committee's recommendations (or explanation as to why not implemented).

- adherence to the stipulations as outlined by the NYS AIS Commission for Accreditation and approved by the NYS AIS Board of Trustees.
- under normal circumstances, the preparation of a progress report in five years, following guidelines provided by NYS AIS as well as a visit by a small committee, that will prepare a report for the NYS AIS Commission on Accreditation.
- a continuous ten-year cycle of self-study and accreditation.

**The self-study process includes:**

- a community-wide process that makes every effort to hear from all the voices in the school's immediate community.
- a process that is more analytical than descriptive. The questions posed in this Manual are designed to provoke this analysis, to be used as launching points for committee discussion and observations, and an examination of strengths and areas for development or improvement.
- transparency, forthrightness, and honesty.
- a concluding self-study section that reflects on how the self-study process was conducted as well as its outcome and discoveries.
- a self-rating on the [NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation Rating Sheet](#)

## The Self-Study and Timelines

Be mindful that the audience for the report is the school's own community, the visiting committee, NYS AIS, and the NYS AIS Commission on Accreditation. Prepare the self-study report with a constant eye to community-wide participation and hearing all voices. It is important for community members to be honest, forthright and direct. Creating committees and subcommittees that cross grade, division, department or administrative office brings a broad, school-wide perspective to the report. Committee and subcommittee reports should focus on analysis over description and build around the school's mission statement, full disclosure of its program and practices, and the congruence between the two.



### Initiating the Process

- For an initial accreditation process, contact the NYS AIS office to plan your timeline. Provisional member schools have up to five years to complete the accreditation requirements.
- For currently accredited schools, NYS AIS will send a notification letter 18-24 months prior to the year of the on-site visit as a reminder to begin planning.

### 12 to 18 months before the on-site visit

- Apprise the school community that the school is undertaking the self-study and accreditation process.
- Review and affirm, and perhaps revise, the school's mission statement. Everything that follows in the self-study process flows from this statement.
- Appoint a self-study Steering Committee.

- The head of school, except in very small schools or in the case of unusual circumstances, should neither chair this committee nor be deeply involved in the overall planning or the writing and editing of the report.
- If possible, the steering committee should have at least three members, of which the head of school may serve as an ex-officio member.
- To chair the committee, the head of school should appoint a member of the faculty or administration who has good standing with the faculty, is organized and detail-oriented, and sees the bigger picture of the school.
- The head and steering committee chair appoint a steering committee. Optimally all committee members should have excellent writing and editing skills.
- Note that the principal functions of the steering committee are to:
  - Set timelines and deadlines and ensure they are adhered to.
  - Develop a report template in regard to format.
  - Create the self-study committee structure that will prepare the various sub-reports.
  - Keep the process moving, help the faculty stay on task and not get bogged down with unnecessary detail, and apprise the head of school of progress and of potential problems (while they are still potential).
  - Ensure that student safety is a priority, and that emergency drills are efficient and well known to teachers and students.
  - Review and edit the sub-reports into the final report.
  - Collect and organize supplementary materials.
- Be in contact with NYS AIS regarding an informational session for steering committee members or an on-site NYS AIS presentation or meeting.
- Develop a budget for the evaluation. Normally, this includes expenses for the visiting committee (travel, accommodations, meals, and supplies), the incidental and internal expenses associated with the self-study, the costs of preparing the self-study report, and any expenses related to staff needing extra release time or in-service days.
- Form self-study committees.
  - Limit committee members, if possible, to no more than three subcommittee assignments. All staff should expect to serve on subcommittees, and some subcommittees will be best served if members of the governing body, parents/guardians, and capable students are represented.
  - Create committees that cross grades, divisions, and departments or administrative offices to bring a broad, school-wide perspective to the report.
- Establish a report template so that self-study committee reports are consistent in format and structure.
- Create a detailed, comprehensive schedule for the self-study process to ensure that all deadlines are realistic and achievable.
- Ensure that the school has submitted the required data to NAIS-DASL. A member of the steering committee will generate data sheets using the DASL program to submit to NYS AIS and the visiting committee along with the self-study.

### **6 to 12 months before the on-site visit**

- Typically, in January or February of the year prior to the site visit, NYS AIS will appoint a visiting committee chair and work with the school to set the dates of the visit. NYS AIS also will be in communication regarding the composition of the visiting committee.
- Expect an on-site visit by one of the NYS AIS Associate Directors of Evaluation and Accreditation.



- Create a table of contents for the self-study that includes all the relevant subcommittees and share this document with the NYSAIS accreditation director assigned to your school.
- Allow ample time for overall editing by the steering committee and general review by the faculty and governing body. (The final document will need to be ready for distribution no later than six weeks before the on-site visit).
- Assemble materials found in the grey Document Box at the end of each section of this Manual and listed in the Appendices and Checklists. The task can be time-consuming, and work should begin on compiling them well before the on-site visit. NYSAIS will provide a password-protected website to which schools should upload supplementary materials they would like to share digitally with the visiting committee.
- Be mindful that the self-study may be no longer than 125 pages and written as a narrative, not following a question-and-answer format. Be succinct and avoid repetition. When revising the draft of the self-study, keep in mind proportionality and be intentional regarding the space allocated to each of the sections and sub-sections.
- Generate DASL reports and undertake any additional data collection to be used in the analysis within the relevant sections of the self-study.
- Review health and safety procedures for the students and staff to assure that fire drills meet legal requirements and that record keeping is in line with state and federal standards. The facilities should be reviewed to assure that fire doors function as intended, lunchrooms and food preparation areas are sanitary, and that cleaning materials and laboratory chemicals are stored properly. **Fire and emergency drills must include reliable attendance procedures that account for all students and adults.** Any deficiencies should be corrected before the visiting committee arrives. Refer to “Safety Checklists” in the Appendices and Checklists section of this Manual for a more detailed explanation of the guidelines, which the visiting committee will use during the visit.
- Complete the NYSAIS Criteria for Accreditation Rating Sheet to get a sense of where the school falls in alignment with the Criteria at the beginning of the process. Use the self-study process to explore the school's self-assessment of its criteria alignment and make any necessary changes to better align with the criteria. Make a plan to complete the rating sheet again at the end of the self-study for submission. A compilation of the Criteria may be found at the end of this manual in the Appendices and Checklists.
  - Be sure to record criteria ratings using whole numbers.
- Depending on the complexity of hotel, travel and transport arrangements, designate someone to handle the visiting committee logistics and the preliminary scheduling for the on-site visit directly with the appointed visiting committee chair.

### 3 to 4 months before the on-site visit

- Host an on-site preliminary visit by the visiting committee chair (and in some instances the assistant chair) with the head of school, the board chair, and the steering committee chair. The topics to cover are listed below. A preliminary visit checklist appears in the supplementary materials section of this manual.
  - Progress report on the self-study process and document.
  - A discussion of the Baseline Criteria and the Verification Statement.
  - Discussion regarding the information that will accompany the self-study document when it is sent.
  - The schedule for the committee’s visit (note [Sample Schedule](#) that follows) and the arrangements for pre-scheduled meetings with students, faculty, trustees, and parents/guardians. The pre-arranged meetings with trustees and parents/guardians

will likely be the only opportunity the visiting committee has to meet with these constituents.

- Discussion between the visiting committee chair and the school's trustees.
- The agenda for the head of school's meeting with the visiting committee on Sunday afternoon.
- Discussion regarding who will attend the community reception on Sunday afternoon and what remarks the visiting committee chair will make.
- Discussion regarding the chair's oral report at the conclusion of the visit.
- Selection of a room at the school where the visiting committee can work undisturbed, which is adequate in size to accommodate all the materials and equipment that will be needed. Be mindful that the committee will work in the evenings and may need tech support as well as access to restrooms and a supply of refreshments.
- Arrangements for accommodations for visiting committee members, which should be as close to the school as possible, and provisions for feeding the committee throughout the day as well as at meal times. Because the major expense of the process comes in providing for the committee, the head of school and visiting committee chair should arrive at common-sense solutions that will serve the committee while avoiding a strain on the school's budget. If the budget is not a constraint, provisions should not be inappropriately lavish or elaborate. Gifts for visiting committee members should be modest—perhaps a school tote bag or shirt.

## **2 months before the on-site visit**

- Contact visiting committee members to determine whether the school needs to provide any computers for the visiting committee's use.
- If committee members are using their own computers, determine what is required to access the school's network. Computers provided by the school must have Internet access.
- Provide written directives for accessing the school's network for both PC and Mac, including passwords.
- Determine if the chair wants projection capability in the committee workroom.
- Arrange for support from the school's technology department throughout the visit, especially at the start, but also including beyond regular school hours, to be certain that printers, computers and other peripheral devices are functioning properly.
- Ensure that the Verification Statement is signed by the head of school and board chair.
- Complete the large chart containing staff information; a digital copy of the chart is available from NYSAIS. A sample wall chart is provided in the appendix.
- Request that staff stay an extra 30 or 45 minutes past dismissal on Monday and Tuesday afternoons of the on-site visit to facilitate contact with visiting committee members.
- Designate a staff member willing to track the community members who have and have not had contact with the committee and to alert the chair no later than Tuesday afternoon at 2:00 p.m.
- Arrange for nametags for the entire staff as well as for the visiting committee.
- Review Appendices and Checklists as well as the Document Box at the end of each section of this Manual so that all issues are addressed before the on-site visit.
- Arrange for transportation of committee members beginning on Sunday afternoon, during the visit, and continuing until their departure. Non-contiguous buildings or more than one campus will require the school to do extensive preliminary planning.
- Upload supplementary materials to the unique, password-protected website provided by NYSAIS.

## Finalizing the Self-Study Report

The final document may be no longer than 125 pages and must include:

- a **table of contents that includes pagination of all subsections.**
- the school's narrative response to the guiding questions asked and the topics outlined in the seven sections of the Manual.
- the conclusion (outline of the process and synthesis of its outcome).
- the DASL Accreditation Data Reports.
- the school's self-ratings on the [NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation Rating Sheet](#) for each of the seven sections (please use whole numbers) as well as the Verification Statement from the head of school and board chair.

Report parameters are:

- **12-point Times New Roman** or **Arial** font on 8½-by-11-inch paper.
- Right margins that are **not justified**.
- Margins that are **at least 1 inch**
- Line spacing: single.
- Pagination as one unit, not by sections.

Report distribution:

- Survey committee members to ascertain preference for a hard copy or digital version of the self-study.
- Convert into **PDF** format for electronic transmission to NYS AIS and visiting committee members who require one.
- Assemble into lightweight, loose-leaf binders for those visiting committee members who require one.

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

### a) Send to **all members of the visiting committee**:

- 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. Before sending materials, ask if the head of school would like to include a personal overview greeting.
- The self-study report, including the rated Criteria for Accreditation and the DASL Accreditation Data Reports.

### b) Send to the **chair** of the visiting committee:

- The above materials as well as ALL items listed as "to be provided in advance" in the Document Box at the end of each section.

### c) Send to the **finance officer** assigned to the visiting committee:

- The above materials as well as ALL items listed as "to be provided in advance" in the Document Box at the end of Section Four.

### d) Send to your NYSAIS Associate Director at either [george@nysais.org](mailto:george@nysais.org) or [shannon@nysais.org](mailto:shannon@nysais.org).

- A digital copy of the self-study report.

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

- Confirm with the visiting committee chair the schedule of pre-arranged meetings between the visiting committee (or parts of the visiting committee) and trustees, parents/guardians, administrators, and various groups of staff/faculty members etc.
- Make final arrangements for computers, printers, accommodations for projection, and tech support.
- Ensure all materials listed in the Document Box at the end of each section are ready for the visiting committee and have an indexed format. Some materials may be in print form; many may be digital. A comprehensive list of required supplementary materials is also available at [this link](#).
- Ensure that all digital supplementary materials are uploaded to the digital folders provided by NYSAIS.
- Arrange for an extra chair in the back of classrooms to accommodate a visitor.
- Finalize plans for transporting, feeding, and housing the visiting committee.
- Ensure that the digital staff spreadsheet or wall chart for the visiting committee's workroom has been completed.

## During the Visit

The following is a **suggested** work schedule. It does not include all subcommittee meetings and may be varied to suit the school's schedule and the preferences of the visiting committee chair.

<b>Sample Committee Work Schedule</b>	
<b>Committee and Subcommittee Activities</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	
Visiting committee sessions begin	1:00 p.m.
Orientation meeting with head of school	2:30 p.m.
Tour of school	3:00 p.m.
Pre-arranged meetings with trustees, finance committee members, and parents/guardians (if they are needed on this day for reasons of availability)	3:45 p.m.
Reception for visiting committee to include members of the school community, trustees, administration, self-study leaders, teachers, parents/guardians and (if appropriate) students	5:45 p.m.
Visiting committee session	7:00 p.m.
<b>Monday</b>	
Visiting committee convenes	8:00 a.m.
Interviews and class visits begin	8:30 a.m.
Governance subcommittee meets with governing body representatives	9:30 a.m.
Admissions subcommittee meets with appropriate staff Finance officer meets with CFO or business manager	10:30 a.m.
Communications/Advancement subcommittee meets with appropriate staff	11:30 a.m.
Lunch with student leaders selected by the school	12:00 p.m.
Student activities subcommittee meets with school-selected representatives	1:00 p.m.
Parents/guardians, faculty, and non-teaching subcommittees meet with appropriate representatives	2:00 p.m.
Subcommittee work session and snack	3:30 p.m.
Fire Drill	TBD
Dinner and committee session as per chair's preference	TBD
<b>Tuesday</b>	
Visiting committee convenes	8:00 a.m.
Class visits and interviews continue to be completed today. If boarding school, subcommittee meets with appropriate staff	9:30 a.m.
Follow-up meeting with financial management subcommittee	9:30 a.m.
Financial assistance subcommittee meets with appropriate staff	10:30 a.m.
Lunch with students selected by the visiting committee	12:00 p.m.
Student Services subcommittee meets with student representatives	1:00 p.m.
Follow-up meeting with administration subcommittee	1:30 p.m.
Subcommittee and committee work session and snack	3:30 p.m.
Dinner and committee session as per chair's preference	TBD
Second Fire Drill (if needed)	TBD
<b>Wednesday</b>	
Visiting committee convenes	8:00 a.m.

Visiting committee completes report	2:30 p.m.
Oral report by chair to school faculty	2:30 p.m.
Adjournment	3:00 p.m.

## Notes about the visit

### *Sunday*

- Welcome the visiting committee members as they arrive and direct them to the designated workroom. For those who have traveled a distance, a light meal might be appreciated.
- Provide a tour of the school. Many schools use students as tour guides.
- Arrange for the head of school to meet with the visiting committee. The committee will appreciate insight into situations and conditions that may require focus. The head should not preempt so much of the available time, however, that the committee members have no opportunity to question the head on matters that need clarification.
- Host a community reception to conclude no later than 7:00 p.m.

### **Succeeding days of the visit**

- Understand that the committee workroom is off-limits to all but the visiting committee.
- Ensure that the school carries on as normally as possible, rather than put on any kind of performance. It is appropriate to reschedule into the time of the committee's visit any important regular feature of the school's program that the committee might otherwise miss (for example, a normal Friday grade-level assembly).
- Inform the chair of the visiting committee without delay if the head of school becomes aware of any unprofessional action on the part of a committee member.
- Plan for the head and steering committee to be available to the visiting committee for questions; otherwise, let the visiting committee function unhindered.
- Understand that the oral report to the school community by the chair on Wednesday afternoon will be brief and general in nature.
- Arrange for reimbursement of the out-of-pocket expenses of committee members.
- On Wednesday morning, the chair will collect travel expense vouchers from the committee members. Direct any questions or concerns about the amounts claimed to NYSAIS.

### **Following the Visit**

- Following the on-site visit, NYSAIS will send a draft copy of the visiting committee's report to the head of the school and request a check of factual accuracy and appropriateness of recommendations. The head of the school is obliged to keep the contents of the report confidential.
- The NYSAIS Commission on Accreditation and Board of Trustees meet in January to determine the accreditation of schools hosting fall on-site visits, and in May for schools with winter and spring visits.
- Notice of the decision about accreditation will come from the NYSAIS Executive Director after the trustees have acted on the recommendation of the NYSAIS Commission on Accreditation.
- The visiting committee's final report will be sent to the school at this time.
- NYSAIS policy prohibits quoting any part of the visiting committee's report or the NYSAIS covering letter in any school publication or press release intended for the public.
- Once accreditation has been granted, mention of NYSAIS should be limited to the statement, "Accredited by the New York State Association of Independent Schools." Material from the

visiting committee's report and NYSAIS' covering letter may be used in school and alums publications whose circulation is limited to members of the school community.

- The head of school and steering committee chair are asked to record comments about the evaluation process and the work of the visiting committee and send them to NYSAIS. These comments help NYSAIS improve the various aspects of the process. All comments are confidential, and candor is appreciated.

## **SECTION ONE**

### **Mission and Culture**

The mission statement is the school's foundation that expresses its unique philosophy, history, and culture. The statement should be clear, dynamic, reviewed at minimum every five years, and used as a standard of measurement for all aspects of the school. The program, board policies, and all levels of decision-making should be in harmony with the statement.

The culture of the school reflects its identity, especially the beliefs, values, and norms that shape individual and collective decisions about behavior and aspirations for the future. The culture developed in each NYSAIS school shapes the hopes and behavior of all members of the school community. It also reflects how a school embraces diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

### **NYSAIS Criteria for Accreditation**

#### **Baseline Criteria**

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

B-1.1 The mission statement has been reviewed within the past five years.

#### **Strategic Criteria**

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

S-1.1 The mission statement is clearly articulated and broadly available to all constituencies of the school community.

S-1.2 The mission statement informs all decisions and programs and is reflected in the behavior of the trustees, employees, students, and families.

S-1.3 The school's commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion is evident in its work to create a respectful environment for all of its constituents

### **Questions and Information to Guide the Self-Study**

Please respond to all questions and prompts in your analytical narrative.

1. Provide a brief history of the school. This should be complete enough to help all readers of the self-study understand when and for what purposes the school was founded and how it has evolved over time.
2. What major changes (e.g., evolution of mission or culture, patterns of enrollment, expansion of programs and services, significant governance, or administrative changes, etc.) have you made since the most recent accreditation.
3. Provide any examples of times in recent years when your school has addressed or reconsidered aspects of the history, legacy, and/or traditions in light of contemporary understandings or recent events.



## **MISSION**

Include the mission of the school and any other statements of purpose, core values, philosophy, and diversity used to support the mission statement.

1. How does the school's mission shape policies that inform its academic, athletic, extracurricular and co-curricular programs, and culture? Attend to the language of the mission in your response. Cite examples of these policies.
2. Describe the most recent formal review of the school's mission statement and explain why it was or was not modified.
3. How has the school's mission informed major decisions since the last self-study? Provide examples.
4. Provide examples that illustrate how each of the school's major constituents (students, teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, trustees, etc.) embody and support the school's mission.
5. In what ways is the school's mission tied to a broader public purpose?
6. Are there aspects of the mission that could be more fully realized? Explain.

## **CULTURE**

1. How does the school's culture reflect and support the school's mission?
2. How does the school create and maintain a respectful environment for all members of its community?
3. How are the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging reflected in these efforts?
4. How does the school collect and use data to inform decision regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community? Cite DASL or other data your school has collected.
5. Reflect on a time in the past five years when the school's climate became significantly challenging. Discuss the process used to understand and address the problems that arose.
6. Select ten pictures or five 30-second videos that richly convey the mission and culture of the school and submit them with an explanation of how these samples were created and why they were chosen and upload them to the site created for your school's accreditation.

## **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 Mission and Culture section? What areas of change are the school considering and how will they be undertaken?

List the names, titles, or positions, of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.

**Documents to be included WITHIN the self-study report or uploaded with the Supplementary Materials**

- The school's mission statement and any other statements of purpose, core values, philosophy, and diversity used to support the mission.
- Ten pictures or five 30-second videos that richly convey the mission and culture of the school.

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

- Copies of school brochures and any documents or links where the school's mission and purposes and objectives are formally published whether in full or in part.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and Learning reflects the practices that derive from beliefs that are consistent with the mission and culture of the school. Demonstrated in this section are the appropriate intellectual, social, physical, artistic, emotional, and ethical development of students in all aspects of school and student life.

The educational program consists of a well-planned and implemented curriculum based on research, best practices, subject knowledge, and assessment. To support teaching and learning, policies and procedures have been established and sufficient instructional materials and facilities are provided. Additionally, professional support for professional learning and professional evaluation contribute to creating a positive educational program.

### **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-2.1 The school provides a program of instruction that is substantially equivalent to that which is afforded in the local public schools.
- B-2.2 Courses are offered in mandated subjects.
- B-2.3 The school day and year are substantially equivalent to those in public schools.
- B-2.4 If the school has a secondary program, the school is registered by the New York State Education Department.

#### **Strategic Criteria**

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

- S-2.1 The formal educational program is consistent with the mission and culture of the school.
- S-2.2 The values and best practices of equity, justice, and anti-bias are integrated into the educational program.
- S-2.3 The school demonstrates that its educational programs and practices are informed and evaluated by research.
- S-2.4 The school uses student demographic data (including but not limited to race and gender) to analyze student progress and engagement, and to assess and evaluate program effectiveness.

- S-2.5 The performance of individual students is regularly assessed by developmentally appropriate measures and effectively communicated to students, faculty, families, and administrators.
- S-2.6 The administration creates a culture of continued, sustained professional growth, offering in-service as well as outside professional development opportunities to all administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel members, for which there is adequate funding.
- S-2.7 The professional development program for faculty, staff, and administrators develops and assesses competencies for promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and well-being.
- S-2.8 The administration has developed, communicated and implemented a program for the systematic evaluation of the faculty administrators, and staff that aligns with professional development goals including those in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- S-2.9 The school has a program that respects and supports the intellectual, social, physical, artistic, developmental, and emotional needs of every student.
- S-2.10 Consistent with the school's pedagogical practices, digital technology is used to support the program and its use is evaluated on a regular basis.
- S-2.11 The school collects information from its alums to assess its educational program.
- S-2.12 Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are aligned with the mission and resources of the school.
- S-2.13 If applicable, the school has a carefully planned and supervised program of auxiliary or off-campus activities that is harmonious with the school's mission.

### **Questions and Information to Guide the Self-Study**

The Teaching and Learning section is designed to provide a holistic approach to the educational program. This section of the self-study should be comprehensive, rather than organized by department or grade level and include an assessment that will clarify priorities in addressing areas that lead to curricular and co-curricular initiatives that guide change or improvement. While the approach of this section is designed to avoid a description of every subject area in every division, the expectation is that the narrative will include examples taken from areas throughout the curriculum, including library and technology. Importantly, the process will also provide evidence of how the criteria have been met. Additionally, reflect on how the school's mission influences the school's philosophical and pedagogical principles and how these have been realized or are yet to be accomplished in the educational program at this moment in time.

A comprehensive list of offerings and curriculum summaries, which include such documents as curriculum guides and curriculum maps, will be provided to the visiting committee as Supplementary Materials. There will be no need to describe in this section that which is found in these documents. The focus should be on analysis.

The questions provide guidance for the narrative. These are intended to promote self-reflection and candid evaluation. Write an analytical narrative, which includes a full consideration of all questions and prompts and provides specific evidence of demonstrated practice.

The Teaching and Learning section can be approached as indicated by the labels that precede the guiding questions. You may adjust the headings to the needs of your school's teaching and learning programs. Be sure to review modifications with the Accreditation Director.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

1. Describe and analyze the organization of the educational program.
  - a. Explain how your school's mission and strategic goals inform the choices made. Provide examples.
  - b. Explain how your school identifies and prioritizes the most pressing curricular needs. Analyze the process.
  - c. Are there offerings that are considered unique (not offered by peer schools)? If so, how do these offerings reflect the mission and philosophy of the school?
2. Describe and analyze the ways in which the curriculum and instructional practices are in harmony with the school's mission.
  - a. Provide three or four examples from across the scope and breadth of the program, which demonstrate how decisions regarding teaching and learning were informed by the school's mission, philosophy and culture. Include such topics as the organization of academic program, grade groupings, etc.
3. Describe and analyze the process and procedures through which the administration and faculty design, develop, evaluate, and revise the curriculum and instructional practices.
  - a. Provide several examples from across the scope and breadth of the program, that demonstrate the rationale and expected outcomes that shape the school's curricular design process. How is what is working and what is not working determined?
  - b. Explain to what extent current research and trends in education were factors in the design and practice of teaching and learning. Give examples.
  - c. The New York State Education Department requires that all independent schools offer a program that is "substantially equivalent" to that offered in NYS (New York State) public schools. Here is [the link](#) to the NYSED Manual for Non-Public School Administrators for reference. How does the school assess and monitor that this is true?
4. Describe and analyze the ways in which the curriculum, instructional practices, and activities outside of the classroom address the needs of students regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, civic and environmental sustainability, and belonging.
  - a. How are diverse experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives represented in the educational program?
  - b. How does data inform instructional decisions in these areas? Cite DASL or other data your school has collected and analyzed.
5. Explain the process and the goals that lead to identifying the strategic initiatives in the program for teaching and learning. What changes have you made to the educational program in recent years? Include the process from identification, prioritization, planning, funding, actualization, and the mechanism in place for assessing outcomes.

6. Present and analyze the extracurricular or co-curricular programs, including athletics, in terms of the school's mission and resources. How do they support the mission of the school? (Co-curricular as distinct from extra-curricular programs are seen as integral to the educational program and often required.)

### **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING**

1. Describe and analyze how the school determines what knowledge and skills are essential.
  - a. How is student learning assessed across the curriculum and span of the grade levels within the school? What is the review process to determine the effectiveness of assessment methods? Note similarities and differences across the scope of the program by age and subject area.
  - b. What does a review of data tell you about student progress and engagement across different demographic categories (race, gender, etc.)? How do you differentiate instruction and support to meet divergent student needs?
  - c. What procedures are in place to assess the success of the school's graduates?

### **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

1. Describe and assess the professional development program for teachers, including professional learning opportunities.
  - a. What provisions exist for the orientation and mentoring of teachers? How are the school's mission and culture conveyed? Are special considerations given to those who are new at teaching?
  - b. How is professional learning supported and how are opportunities communicated?
  - c. Assess the effectiveness of the employee professional learning program in promoting growth for the individual teacher. Provide several examples.
  - d. Assess the effectiveness of the professional learning program in promoting growth for the school and students in the classroom.
  - e. In what ways does the professional learning program develop competencies to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and student well-being?

### **ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING**

1. Describe and assess the methods of performance evaluation for teaching personnel.
  - a. Assess the effectiveness of the employee performance evaluation in promoting professional growth.
  - b. What is the role of goal-setting in the evaluation program?
  - c. In what ways does the evaluation program assess faculty instructional practice?
  - d. How does the evaluation program assess faculty competencies to advance the mission and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and student well-being?

### **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 Teaching and Learning section? What areas of change are the school considering and how will they be undertaken?

**List the names and titles or positions of everyone involved in the development and writing of this overview report.**

**Documents to be provided ON SITE, either online or hard copy**

- School calendar, class schedules, and other materials that illustrate how the school's educational vision is put into practice.
- Curriculum descriptions and/or individual course outlines.
- List of extracurricular or co-curricular offerings.
- Papers, presentations, documents, and posts or articles that have been written by school personnel that relate to the overall philosophy of the school.
- A sample professional development plan for an administrator, teacher, or staff member.

## **SECTION THREE**

### **Governance**

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 implementing new policy and making 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.
- B-3.6 The governing body has approved a written policy for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and abuse.

#### **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 is responsible for establishing broad school policies and appropriately delegates responsibility for the operations of the school to the head of school.
- S-3.7 The governing body ensures that the head of school receives appropriate support, evaluation, and compensation.
- S-3.8 The governing body ensures that financial resources are provided for the school.
- S-3.9 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-3.10 The governing body understands its central role in institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
- 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 has made a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion which is explicit in the school's policies and procedures.
- S-3.14 The governing body's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is reflected in the training, recruitment, and retention of trustees.
- S-3.15 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 Self-Study**

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, and its 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. If 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. How has the board integrated the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the recruitment, orientation, training, and ongoing education of trustees?
  - d. Are any changes to the orientation or development program 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?
  - d. How does the board recruit and cultivate new members? What criteria are used? How does the board ensure a diversity of experiences, identities, and perspectives within its membership?
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 and 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 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 might the board of trustees and administration proceed following a report of sexual misconduct against a past or current employee?
- 13. 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?

List the names and titles or positions of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.

**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.
- Copy of the board-approved policy for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and abuse.

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **Financial Sustainability**

Effective financial management and planning are essential to sustain the school and its mission. The school's finance, advancement, admissions, and financial assistance practices and policies should be prudent and in harmony with the established mission of the school.

The policies, processes and procedures by which students are attracted to the school, then selected, admitted, and supported, must also be in keeping with the mission of the school and regularly assessed for evenness of application, integrity, and effectiveness.

#### **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-4.1 The administration carries out appropriate follow-up to the annual audit of all financial records and the management letter.
- B-4.2 The administration has procedures and personnel in place and accounts for all assets and liabilities in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- B-4.3 The administration has a clearly articulated policy and a discernible procedure to follow school-wide, non-discriminatory practices.
- B-4.4 The administration determines eligibility for admission based on the merits of the application and then determines how to allocate financial aid resources to fulfill the mission of the school and meet student needs.

##### **Strategic Criteria**

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

- S-4.1 The board of trustees, head of school, and finance officer work collaboratively and strategically to ensure the development and implementation of appropriate policies, practices, and processes for the sustainable, long-term management of the school.
- S-4.2 The administration manages the school's resources in a prudent manner, consistent with the mission, safeguarding the value of those assets for the use of future generations of students.
- S-4.3 The administration implements sound financial and management practices and procedures, including the development of an annual operating and capital budget, multi-year budget projections, and the execution of an annual audit.
- S-4.4 The process for determining compensation for administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel reflect independent and/or local school standards as well as meet all legal requirements and is reviewed for potential inequity and bias.

- S-4.5 Salaries and benefits are communicated clearly to individual employees.
- S-4.6 The administration has a clear picture of its long- and short-term institutional development needs as well as the organizational structure, resources, and staffing to carry out its efforts.
- S-4.7 The admission process operates under a clear set of practices for gathering, disseminating, and maintaining prospective student information, and respects the confidentiality of students, families, and documents.
- S-4.8 Admissions policies and procedures ensure that the composition of the student body advances the mission of the school and reflects a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- S-4.9 Prior to making an enrollment offer, the administration follows a clear and transparent admission and financial aid process that communicates information, dates, timeframes, as well as all financial obligations for attending the school.
- S-4.10 The relationship between student enrollment and the number of administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel is at an appropriate level for the financial sustainability of the school and the successful operation of its program.

## **Questions and Information to Guide the Self-Study**

Your school's response should include full consideration of the questions and prompts. Provide an analytical narrative for each area listed in bold.

### **FINANCE**

1. Describe and assess the effectiveness of the organization, staffing, and resources used by the school's finance office.
2. Describe and assess the effectiveness of the following procedures:
  - a. billing and collection of tuition and fees including provisions for delinquent tuition accounts
  - b. development, review, and approval of annual budgets and multi-year financial plans
  - c. financial reporting to the various constituencies of the school
  - d. procurement of goods and services
  - e. interaction with the school's auditing firm
  - f. preparation of Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Form 990 and the approval by the board of trustees
  - g. implementation of changes as a result of the annual audit and the management letter
  - h. reconciliation of internal management financial reports to GAAP-audited financial statements.
3. What policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the school's resources are used in a prudent manner, consistent with the school's mission?
4. How does the school assess that there is an appropriate balance between student enrollment and total staffing to meet the school's mission while maintaining long-term financial sustainability?

5. How does the school engage in long-term financial forecasting and planning? If a plan is in place, assess its efficacy.
  - a. How does the long-term financial plan support the accomplishment of the mission of the school?
  - b. Are its implications understood and accepted among the various constituencies of the school?
  - c. Are its objectives, including those defined by strategic initiatives, incorporated in annual budgets?
  - d. How does the long-term financial plan demonstrate and ensure the financial viability of the school over the next three to five years?
6. How does the administration use data to inform overall financial decision-making? Are these systems and procedures adequate to the needs of the school? Are there additional or different forms of data that would better assist the administration with financial decision-making?
7. How are the salaries and benefits of administrators, faculty members, and non-teaching personnel determined and assessed? Are salary ranges and bands used?
8. What is the process for determining equitable compensation? Who is responsible for the determination? How does the school leverage collaboration across the different areas of the school to provide varying perspectives and mitigate potential bias in these decisions?
9. What procedures are in place to assess that there is an appropriate balance among tuition and fees, foundation grants, corporate and matching gifts, fundraising activities, entrepreneurial activities, and donated services? What are the vulnerabilities (if any) with this balance?
10. If the school is managing debt, describe the school's current indebtedness, its funding sources, the plan for managing it, the percentage of the operating budget allocated to servicing the debt, and measures being taken to retire the debt.
11. How do the administration and board assess the suitability and sustainability of the physical plant as a vehicle through which the program is delivered? What plans are in place to modify, modernize, update, or add to the physical plant? How will any changes and improvements to the physical plant be funded?
12. What specific changes, if any, has the administration implemented following an analysis of the annual audit and management letter?

#### **DEVELOPMENT / INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT**

1. Describe and assess the effectiveness of the organization, staffing, and resources used by the school's fundraising program and how these interface with other advancement initiatives, such as public relations, publications, alums and parents/guardians.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the relationship, including communication processes, between the administrators responsible for development/institutional advancement and the governing body in meeting the school's overall fundraising goals.
3. What is the relationship between development planning and the school's long-range financial plan?
4. How does the administration use data to inform decisions and planning regarding fundraising? Are these systems and procedures adequate to the needs of the school? Are there additional or different forms of data that would better assist the administration with fundraising?
5. Have the school's institutional advancement efforts changed over the past five years? If so, how? Please use data to analyze these trends.

## **ADMISSIONS**

1. Describe and assess the effectiveness of the organization, staffing and resources used by the school's admissions program.
2. Describe and assess the effectiveness of the following admissions procedures:
  - a. identifying, contacting, and cultivating prospective students
  - b. maintaining a current understanding of programs and expectations
  - c. managing pressure from influences outside the admissions office, such as "a friend" of a trustee, a sending school, etc.
  - d. integration of new students into the program, including grade placement, sectioning, recommendation for summer study, rooming assignments, etc.
  - e. disposal of the admissions folders of applicants who do not matriculate at the school.
3. What are the school's policies and/or practices regarding the diversity of its students? Do they give consideration to socioeconomic factors, demographics, academic ability; and, when applicable, international students? And how are the school's broad purposes and mission served by these policies/practices? Include a discussion of any legacy policy.
4. What demographic identifiers are used in the collection of student data? How are they determined? Are students and parents/guardians asked to self-identify?
5. How is the school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion reflected in its admissions policies and/or practices? What diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and practices are used in the admissions process? Where do they come from and why were they chosen?
6. How can the school be as inclusive and equitable as possible within the boundaries of its mission? How is the school engaging and examining the categories as described in the mission?
7. How does the school use data to assess admissions trends as well as the overall success and retention of new students over time? What changes have been made in admissions procedures based on such reviews? Are these systems and procedures adequate to the needs of the school? Are there additional or different forms of data that would better assist the administration with admissions?
8. Have the school's admissions efforts changed over the past five years? If so, how? Please use data to analyze these trends.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

1. Describe and assess the school's financial assistance resources, procedures, and policies for both initial and continuing grants. How does the school determine financial awards? In what ways does the application of the school's financial assistance resources reflect the school's mission?
2. If the school extends financial awards, including endowed scholarships, that call for other qualifications (e.g. academic or other merit, or membership of a specific ethnic or religious group) in addition to need, or without reference to need, how do these support the mission of the school?
3. How is the program of financial assistance communicated to current and prospective families?
4. How does the administration use data to inform decisions and planning regarding financial assistance? Are these systems and procedures adequate to the needs of the school? Are there additional or different forms of data that would better assist the administration with financial assistance?
5. Has the school's financial assistance changed over the past five years? If so, how? Please use data to analyze these trends.



## **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 Financial Sustainability section? What changes is the school considering?

**List the names, titles or positions, of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.**

### **Documents to be provided IN ADVANCE to the visiting committee Chair and the designated committee member reviewing finances ONLY:**

- The school's last two audited financial statements and management letters prepared by an independent certified public accountant. Include the management response to the auditor's management letter.
- The current operating budget as well as a copy of the long-range financial plan or budget projections.
- The most recent year-to-date operating statement, showing budgeted income and expense compared to actual figures.
- The operating statement for the most recently completed year, showing budgeted income and expense compared to actual figures.
- Information about the process used for benchmarking highly compensated employees.
- Sample copies of all most recent financial reports that the governing body regularly reviews.

### **Documents to be provided ON SITE, preferably in digital form:**

- IRS Form 990 and supporting schedules for the past two years.
- Admissions, financial aid, and recruiting materials.
- Sample of current Enrollment Contract.

## SECTION FIVE

### Operations

The school's faculty, administrators, and non-teaching personnel are key to carrying out the program and, ultimately, the mission of the school. Effective hiring, as well as adequate compensation and working conditions are important factors in creating a positive educational community.

Effective administrative management is essential to sustain the school and its mission. The plant operations, record keeping, and attention to all levels of safety should be prudent and in harmony with the established mission of the 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-5.1 The administration and staff have developed materials, routines, training sessions, and procedures for both on- and off-campus activities that foster a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment for all members of the school community.
- B-5.2 To support the needs of the children and goals of the program, the administration and staff provide appropriate equipment and instructional play and work spaces.
- B-5.3 The school has safety and attendance procedures in place for students and adults in the event of fire or other emergencies.
- B-5.4 A plan is in place for the long-term protection and renewal of physical plant and facilities.
- B-5.5 The school maintains accurate, complete, and secure records that are protected against damage and catastrophic loss.
- B-5.6 Appropriate attendance records are kept and are on file.
- B-5.7 The administration fingerprints all new employees.

#### Strategic Criteria

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

- S-5.1 The administration provides leadership in, and appropriate evaluation of, the implementation of the mission, standards, and policies of the school.
- S-5.2 The school develops, communicates, and implements plans for the supervision, safety, and health of students.

- S-5.3 The administration has developed and implemented clear, written, consistently applied hiring, termination, and record retention procedures.
- S-5.4 The administration has taken steps to identify and, if identified, remedy bias in hiring and provides equitable opportunities for promotion and leadership development to all employees.
- S-5.5 Faculty and non-teaching personnel assignments are appropriate and equitable across key demographics in terms of teaching conditions, total load, methods, and duties.
- S-5.6 Staff members are qualified by education, training, or experience for the responsibilities to which they are assigned.
- S-5.7 The administration has developed, communicated, and implemented a program for the systematic evaluation of all administrators and non-teaching personnel.
- S-5.8 The physical facilities and equipment are adequately maintained.
- S-5.9 The administration and staff provide channels of communication with parents/guardians and members of the school community that are sufficient and consistent with the purposes and objectives of the school.
- S-5.10 The administration and staff employ methods of communicating with the external community that are appropriate to the school's size, means, culture, and mission.

## **Questions and Information to Guide the Self-Study**

Your school's response should include a full consideration of the questions and prompts. Provide an analytical narrative and specific evidence of demonstrated practice.

1. Describe and assess the recruitment and hiring of teaching and non-teaching personnel to fulfill the school's mission, meet the needs of the program and students, and ensure fairness.
  - a. How is staffing determined, in all positions, so that the program may be effectively carried out? How are qualifications determined for every role? How often are job descriptions reviewed?
  - b. What measures are in place to ensure a high-quality and diverse pool of teaching and non-teaching candidates and personnel? What instrument is used to make that determination? How are teachers and non-teaching personnel recruited? Who is responsible for each area of hiring? Has there been a burden placed on employees with certain cultural identifiers to reach out to their communities in order to increase diversity in the hiring pool, and if so, how has that been addressed? Assess the overall effectiveness of the hiring process.
  - c. What steps does the school take to establish a clear and accurate background profile for each newly hired employee?
  - d. What steps have been taken to mitigate the effects of bias in the hiring process? What mechanisms exist to challenge presumptions and assumptions made during the process? How are the hiring committees put together? What is the rubric used and how is it developed? Are there standard questions used for each interview?

- e. Reflect on the demographics of the faculty and staff in relation to the overall school culture.
2. How are faculty and staff workloads assessed with consideration to equitable division of responsibilities?
  - a. How are the conditions of employment, compensation, and benefits outlining a staff member's employment determined and conveyed to each staff member?
  - b. Interpret data that pertains to personnel. What implications emerge for your school as they relate to achieving equity in the hiring process and assigned workload as well as reflecting the school's and community's population? Use data in your response.
  - c. How are teaching and non-teaching employees assigned to their roles? Discuss the methods used to determine whether assignments are appropriate and equitable across key demographics in terms of teaching conditions, total load, methods, and duties.
3. Describe and assess the professional development program for non-teaching personnel, including professional learning opportunities.
  - a. How is professional learning supported and how are opportunities communicated?
  - b. What provisions exist for the orientation and mentoring of non-teaching personnel? How are the school's mission and culture conveyed? Are special considerations given to those new to their specific non-teaching position?
  - c. In what ways does the professional development program develop competencies to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and student well-being?
  - d. Assess the effectiveness of the professional learning program in promoting growth for the school.
4. Describe and assess the methods of performance evaluation of non-teaching personnel.
  - a. What provisions exist for the orientation and mentoring of non-teaching personnel? How are the school's mission and culture conveyed? Are special considerations given to those new to their specific non-teaching position?
  - b. Assess the effectiveness of the employee performance evaluation in promoting growth for the individual and the school.
  - c. In what ways does the evaluation program assess staff competencies to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and well-being?
  - d. What methods are used to determine whether equitable opportunities for promotion and leadership development are provided to all employees? Who is responsible for reviewing these?
5. Assess the effectiveness of the facility and equipment, including such spaces devoted to digital technology, library, and athletics, to meet the needs of the program and students.
  - a. Describe and assess the process by which the needs for systematic, long-term protection and renewal of the physical assets of the school are determined, prioritized, and funded?
  - b. Evaluate the adequacy of plant maintenance. Include custodial care, staffing, and financial resources.
  - c. Describe and assess how the school has addressed environmental sustainability with regards to the physical plant.
6. Describe the form in which the school maintains current records for its employees, students, financial operations, development, admissions, and corporate records.

- a. How are these records secured from unauthorized access, theft, and catastrophic loss? Include the security of any digitized records in your analysis.
  - b. Describe and assess the school's policy with respect to keeping past records? In what form are these records maintained?
7. What is the process for systematic safety inspections? Assess the effectiveness of the procedures in place.
- a. Who conducts these inspections and reviews the procedures in place?
  - b. What are the written procedures for addressing routine safety issues, such as arrival and dismissal times, fire drills, and community lockdowns? How are these procedures communicated to parents/guardians, faculty, and staff?
  - c. What is the process for developing, updating, and communicating crisis/emergency plans?
  - d. Describe and assess the procedures for ensuring the safety of science laboratories.
  - e. Who is responsible for ensuring the school is aware of changes in requirements that may impact the school?
8. What are the internal and external communication needs of the school and how well are these met? How well does the school website support these needs?
- a. What changes have occurred during the past several years regarding the ways that the school communicates to its constituents?
  - b. Illustrate ways that the school's goals, policies and priorities are communicated to the various constituencies, including students, parents/guardians, faculty, administrators, non-teaching personnel, alums, supporters, local community members, and the larger educational community.
  - c. How does the school officially communicate its policies and practices with respect to differences in ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic level, physical ability, and learning style?

## **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 Operations section? What areas of change are the school considering and how will they be undertaken?

**List the names, titles or positions, of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.**

### **Documents to be provided ON SITE, preferably in digital format**

- Any Faculty, Administrator, and/or non-teaching personnel surveys.
- Sample faculty and staff member employment contract or letter of agreement with the school setting forth the terms of employment.
- Sample faculty, administration, and non-teaching assessment or evaluation tools and related documents.
- Short-term and long-term capital expenditure plan.
- Facilities Master Plan (if applicable).
- Schedule for systematic maintenance of facilities and equipment.
- Report of the latest systematic review of safety issues and practices.
- Emergency preparedness plan(s).

- Documents to show that facilities and personnel meet applicable local and state public safety and health regulations.
- Sample forms used in the hiring process.
- Copy of the fingerprinting and background check policy and procedures.
- Sample forms used to maintain permanent records of current and former employees.
- Certificate(s) of Occupancy (when required by ordinance).
- Log of emergency drills.
- Most recent fire inspection report.

## **SECTION SIX**

### **Student Life and Community**

The school's unique mission is brought to life through the educational program, but also through the experiences of members of its community. Students are at the center of any school, and their academic, social, and emotional growth is the school's primary work. In addition to the educational program, the school should provide a range of offerings to meet the many developmental needs of the students.

The relationship between the parents/guardians and the school is also an important factor in the success of each student and the school in the fulfillment of its mission. At its best, the relationship is mutually supportive and marked by clear, respectful, and honest communication.

Schools also function within a larger community—from the neighborhood to the municipality, to the state, country, and world—in both educational and non-educational capacities. How a school offers useful contributions to that community, and takes advantage of its wealth of offerings, inevitably strengthens the mission and the culture of the school as well as the experiences of its students.

Finally, schools will vary widely in the methods, types, and systems used to communicate with the various constituencies of their communities as well as in marketing and public relations efforts and the larger educational world. Communication generally arises out of the mission of the school, the needs and goals of its community members, and the complexity of its organization (boarding, multiple campuses, and/or divisions, etc.).

### **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-6.1 The school has created, implemented, and communicated written policies, procedures, and educational programs to protect the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of all students.
- B-6.2 The program for health care, including nutrition, is adequate to meet the needs of the students and accounts for the prevention and care of illness and injury.

#### **Strategic Criteria**

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

- S-6.1 Within the context of the school's mission, resources, and legal obligations, the administration and faculty provide equal and equitable access to a full school experience for all students.
- S-6.2 Administrators, teachers, staff members, students and parents/guardians demonstrate a respect for and responsibility towards building and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

- S-6.3 Within the context of the school's mission, resources, and legal obligations, the administration and faculty provide equal and equitable access for all students.
- S-6.4 The school uses various methods to regularly assess students' emotional health and development and uses this information to analyze and improve, where necessary, the collective experience of its students.
- S-6.5 The administration and faculty have developed and implemented a program for orienting and mentoring all members new to the school community.
- S-6.6 Consistent with the mission and educational program, the guidance, counseling, and learning services and support programs meet student needs and support the expression of diverse experiences.
- S-6.7 The administration provides clear, mission-driven expectations regarding participation of parents/guardians in the school community.
- S-6.8 Participation by parents/guardians in the school community is mission-appropriate.
- S-6.9 The school's mission informs and guides interactions with the local community to enhance relationships and student experiences.

***For schools with boarding or homestay programs.***

- B-6.3 Schools enrolling homestay students develop and implement guidelines that provide a student experience that is in keeping with the mission of the school, including the NYSAIS Best Practices for Equity and Justice.
- S-6.10 The administration and staff have developed an intentional boarding and/or homestay program that is a unified and equitable part of the total life of the school for both boarding and day students.
- S-6.11 The administration and staff provide clear expectations and guidance so that students develop respectful, cooperative, and meaningful relationships with those with whom they live and interact.
- S-6.12 The administration and staff have provided guidelines for the evening, weekend, and vacation offerings that are consistent with the mission of the school and the needs of the students.
- S-6.13 Thoughtful procedures are in place for the appropriate placement and monitoring of students in either dormitory or homestay situations.

### **Questions and Information to Guide the Self-Study**

Your school's response should include a full consideration of the questions and prompts. Provide an analytical narrative for each area listed in bold.



## **STUDENT BODY**

1. Is the composition of the student body consistent with the mission of the school? Describe the diversity of the student body and any changes that have taken place in its composition over the last ten years.
  - a. How does your school define diversity? Where does this definition appear in your guiding documents and policies?
  - b. What are the demographic identifiers that your school recognizes, values, and protects? Where do those categories appear explicitly and how are they determined?
  - c. What measures of diversity can be used to track progress towards your goals? Why are they important? Who is tracking them? What do you want to happen to the trend over time? What interventions are needed to reach those goals?
  - d. What are some guiding questions your school wants to ask itself about its diversity efforts? Why are these important questions? Whose perspectives do you need to shape this conversation? How will the answers lead to strategic initiatives?
2. What student groups (clubs, activities, affinity groups, etc.) exist and how well do they function to meet the needs of the student body?
3. How are students involved in decision-making processes in the school? Use several recent examples for illustration.
4. What is the process by which conflicts, disputes, and disagreements between individuals and groups of students are resolved? Provide recent examples of situations that were resolved between students satisfactorily and situations that indicate improvement is needed.
5. How is the expectation that students demonstrate a respect for and responsibility towards building and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community communicated?
  - a. What is required for students, what is optional?
  - b. What are the reporting mechanisms in place for incidents?
  - c. Give an example of how the school addressed an incident in the recent past to help students learn. What would you do differently next time?

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

1. Discuss the school's written policies, procedures, and educational programs designed to protect the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of all students. Where are they located (in the student handbook, parent/guardian handbook, employee handbook and/or enrollment contract)? Are they visible and accessible to constituencies? How are they communicated? How is feedback collected to inform these policies? Give an example of how a policy is embedded in the daily life at the school.
2. Discuss and assess the processes for student orientation, academic course selection, monitoring of student academic and emotional progress, minor and major infractions of rules and behavioral standards, and reporting to parents/guardians.
3. How do the advisors and classroom teachers meet the needs of students in their care? Discuss how they are trained to meet these needs.
4. What mechanisms are in place for every adult, including non-teaching staff, to monitor students' emotional health and development on an ongoing basis? How is training used to support them? How is the information gathered shared between teachers, counselors, and deans? How is it used to analyze and improve, where necessary, the collective experience of its students?
5. Discuss the methods used by the school to maintain a climate that promotes student physical and emotional health. How do these methods reflect the values of the mission? How does the school respond to the diverse needs of its students?

6. How are the special educational needs of individual students assessed?
  - a. Assess the process by which appropriate teaching/learning plans are developed and implemented?
  - b. What resources outside the school are used both in developing these plans and implementing them?
  - c. How is the use of outside tutors or counselors monitored?
7. Evaluate the counseling/guidance program with respect to the health, physical safety, and emotional wellbeing of students. Who is responsible for the program and how is their bandwidth assessed?
  - a. How does the school determine which services it can reasonably provide to support a family and child within the school? How does it communicate what the school can provide within its walls at no additional cost?
8. What supports are in place for students with unique needs (e.g., international students, students from underserved populations, special needs students, etc.) and how are they communicated and reviewed for effectiveness?
9. Describe and assess the placement services offered to students once they finish the program of study at the school. This may be for placement in elementary schools, high schools, or colleges. How does the placement program reflect and support the school's mission, student needs, and family expectations?
  - a. When applicable, describe and assess the college placement process. What changes, if any, have been made to this process in recent years?
10. What health and nutritional services do the school provide for its students?
  - a. Assess the number, duties and training of the staff providing health services at the school. Are these sufficient to meet the needs of the school population?
  - b. What processes are in place to ensure that local and state health codes are being followed regarding all aspects of student health?
  - c. Evaluate programs offered to help students understand issues of sexuality, healthy living, and peer relationships.

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

The School should utilize a parent/guardian survey to inform this section of the self-study. A sample survey is provided among the Appendices and Checklists.

1. Describe and assess the procedures for the communication with and orientation of parents/guardians in the school community. How are parents/guardians instructed as to the appropriate ways to support their own students as well as the school?
2. How is the expectation that parents/guardians demonstrate a respect for and responsibility towards building and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community communicated?
  - a. What is the measurement tool used to determine whether this commitment is understood and put into practice?
  - b. What diversity, equity, and inclusion offerings exist for parents/guardians? Describe participation.
3. If the school has an association of parents/guardians, comment on its purpose and structure (including the use of affinity groups, if appropriate); who is involved in it; how it functions within the school community; and what are its current strengths and challenges. Are the purposes of the association met? In schools without a formal association of parents/guardians, what other means are utilized to promote parent/guardian engagement?

4. Describe and assess the process for working with parents/guardians and students when a student is at risk. What are the customary steps that might lead ultimately to a student's required withdrawal for academic or disciplinary reasons?
5. What themes emerged through the parent/guardian survey that reaffirm your understanding of the parent/guardian experience at your school and point to ways that the school might refine programs and procedures to better meet the needs of families?

## **BOARDING AND/OR HOMESTAY PROGRAM**

1. How does the boarding and/or homestay program reflect the mission of the school and the school's commitment to the [NYS AIS Principles of Best Practice for Equity and Justice](#)?
2. How does the school establish, communicate, and maintain high standards for student behavior, relationships, and support? Assess the effectiveness of these programs.
3. What's the tool for measuring student wellbeing in the boarding/homestay program? What are the pivot options for students after being placed with a host family if those measures are not met?
4. What steps are taken to ensure an environment of home-like, adult support for the boarding student? How does the school prepare and orient the host families of homestay students?
5. What programs are in place to orient international students who are boarders and/or homestay students? Do the parents of international students receive any targeted communication regarding what to expect and/or more frequent student progress updates?
6. If the boarding and/or homestay population of the school is a minor part of the total, describe the administrative and programmatic aspects of the boarding program that are intentionally designed to unify the boarding and the day students equitably into the whole. Conversely, if the school has a minority of day students, describe the steps by which efforts are made to unite the day students equitably into the life of the entire school?
7. If the school has a homestay program, how are host families selected? Is there a practice of tapping legacy host families? Are cultural identities aligned between the students and hosts, giving consideration to food, religion, and cultural norms?
8. What methods are in place to communicate with and support homestay families and the students in their charge that ensure that the student's experience is in keeping with the mission of the school? Assess the effectiveness of the guidelines provided for families with homestay students.
9. What are the qualifications and responsibilities of the staff who supervise boarding students? How are boarding personnel recruited? What professional development is in place for boarding personnel? How are the boarding personnel evaluated? Assess the effectiveness of the boarding employee performance evaluation.

## **THE SCHOOL AND THE EXTERNAL COMMUNITY**

1. To what extent does the community reflect and influence the mission and culture of the school? How has the location influenced the school and its offerings?
2. In what ways is the school a "good neighbor" to its surrounding community and what are the ways that relationship is assessed? How does the school demonstrate that it acts with a "public purpose" in mind? If tensions have existed recently between the school and the local community, describe the circumstances and the steps taken to resolve these tensions.
3. If not addressed elsewhere in the self-study report, describe and assess any off-campus or auxiliary programs and how they support the mission of the school. Auxiliary programs may include such activities as summer and/or entrepreneurial programs.
4. Does the school try to be an active member of the global community and if so, how?

## **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 Student Life and Community section? What areas of change is the school considering?

**List the names and titles or positions of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.**

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

- A list of any auxiliary programs as well as advisors/coordinators.
- If there is a boarding program, provide a list of weekend activities for boarding students.
- For each of the last three terminating classes, show where these students went following their final year at school (e.g., another school, college, vocation, etc.).
- Samples of various forms used to collect or record information about students such as registration forms, application blanks, health forms, grade report forms, permanent record forms, etc.
- Examples of any student climate surveys/assessments
- Samples of regular parent/guardian communication and access to online communication.
- The raw data, or electronic access to the raw data, of any parent/guardian surveys that have been conducted as part of this self-study process.
- The Parent/Guardian Handbook as well as any additional documents, if needed, to guide homestay families.
- Sample communication from the parent/guardian association (if applicable) and access to online communication.
- Access to the parent/guardian association's by-laws, schedule of meetings, list of the officers, and class representatives (if applicable).
- Provide samples of the various methods of communication such as:
  - newsletters
  - websites
  - annual report on giving (unless already provided as part of the development section)
  - literary magazines
  - head of school's communication
  - trustee's communication
  - viewbooks
  - student announcements
  - marketing
  - communication with alums, etc.

## **SECTION SEVEN**

### **Self-study Process, Reflection, and Conclusion**

The conclusion should be viewed as a major synthesis and reflective statement on the self-study report, and thus include commentary on the major findings and challenges that have emerged. Included in this might be areas that the self-study has revealed as requiring a high degree of attention and areas that are likely to have slipped underneath the larger goals. Finally, the school should reflect on areas deserving close attention in the next five years.

### **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-7.1 The school has completed and submitted the required Verification Statement.

#### **Strategic Criteria**

*This criterion is rated by both the school and the visiting committee on a scale of one to six.*

S-7.1 The school has completed a thorough self-evaluation at all levels in accordance with the procedures outlined by NYS AIS.

### **Questions and Information to Guide the Conclusion**

The following questions and topics are intended as prompts for an analytical review.

1. Describe briefly and assess the self-study process as an instrument for strategic initiatives and school growth.
2. What did you learn about the school that will help you the next time the school undertakes a comprehensive review?
3. Provide an overview of the major findings that are celebratory as well as areas in need of improvement that were an outcome of the process.

**List the names, titles or positions, of everyone involved in the development and writing of this section of the self-study.**

**Documents to be included WITHIN the self-study report or uploaded with the Supplementary Materials**

- All DASL Accreditation Data Reports

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

- Verification Statement

## **Appendices and Checklists**

[Verification Statement \(page 47\)](#)

[Sample Board Assessment \(page 48\)](#)

[Fire Safety Checklist \(page 52\)](#)

[General Facility Safety Checklist \(page 53\)](#)

[Sample Parent/Guardian Survey \(page 54\)](#)

[Supplementary Materials Checklist \(page 55\)](#)

[NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation Rating Sheet \(page 58\)](#)

[Sample Wall Chart \(page 64\)](#)

[Glossary \(page 65\)](#)



## Verification Statement

Independent schools are subject to laws, regulations, and guidelines by various federal, state, and local entities. On an ongoing basis, as well as part of the NYS AIS accreditation process, the Board and Administration for each school are expected to regularly conduct a review of their compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to:

- The school's charter granted by the State Board of Regents and any applicable regulations of the Commissioner of Education;
- The New York State Not-For-Profit Corporations Law, including the Non-Profit Revitalization Act of 2013, as amended;
- Child abuse reporting requirements;
- New York State Education Law;
- Local, state, and federal civil rights and anti-discrimination requirements;
- The Handbooks, Manuals, and Guidelines provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for non-public schools operating in the State of New York;
- Applicable state and local transportation laws;
- State and local requirements for pupil immunizations, exemptions, and recordkeeping;
- Fire codes and certificate of occupancy requirements;
- State and local health codes; and
- Where applicable, specific social service laws and health regulations for early childhood programs.

By signing below, you acknowledge your understanding of the responsibility of the Board and Administration in ensuring that the school is complying, in good faith, with the legal requirements applicable to non-public schools.

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Board Chair Signature

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Head of School Signature

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Date

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Date



# NYS AIS Manual for Evaluation and Accreditation

## SAMPLE Board Assessment

### Manual 4.3

*The following evaluation of fundamental governing body and individual trustee responsibilities is designed to stimulate thought about how the Board of Trustees should operate, to assess how it might improve its performance, and to assist in the writing of the Section Three, Governance, of the NYS AIS Manual for Evaluation and Accreditation.*

For each section, rate the performance of the governing body of the school on the following scale:

- |                                      |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 6 = outstanding                      | 3 = needs improvement                           |
| 5 = very good                        | 2 = work has begun, but needs major improvement |
| 4 = satisfactory, for the time being | 1 = topic not yet on board's agenda             |

Rating	Mission
	The members of the governing body recognize and fulfill their responsibility as stewards of the mission.
	The governing body assures that the mission is clear and understood by all the constituencies of the school.
	The governing body periodically reviews the mission statement and provides for continuity of the mission in the life of the school.
	The governing body has made a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion which is explicit in the school's policies and procedures.
	<b>Relationship with the Head of School</b>
	The governing body ensures that the head of school receives appropriate support, evaluation, and compensation.
	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.
	The governing body provides stability in transitions of leadership for itself and its head of school.
	<b>Financial Oversight</b>
	The governing body has policies in place to support the creation, review and approval of an annual operating and capital budget as well as a multi-year financial plan.
	The governing body ensures that financial resources are provided for the school.
	The governing body understands its central role in institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
	The governing body ensures administrative follow up as a result of an outside annual professional audit and the corresponding management letter.



	<b>Fiduciary Responsibility</b>
	The governing body periodically reviews that the board and the school follow all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
	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.
	The governing body reviews and maintains appropriate bylaws that conform to legal requirements.
	The governing body creates a conflict-of-interest policy that is reviewed annually with, and signed by, individual trustees.
	The governing body keeps full and accurate records of its meetings, committees, and policies.
	The governing body has approved a written policy for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and abuse.
	<b>Board Membership</b>
	The roles and responsibilities of the governing body are clearly defined, transparent, and communicated to all constituents.
	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.
	The governing body's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is reflected in the training recruitment, and retention of trustees.
	<b>Strategic Orientation</b>
	The governing body undertakes effective strategic planning for the school.
	Members of the governing body focus on the strategic interests and needs of the school in fulfilling their responsibilities.
	<b>School Communications</b>
	The governing body ensures the confidentiality of all conversations.
	The decisions of the governing body are effectively communicated to the appropriate constituents.



## Self-Evaluation to be Completed by Individual Board Members

For each section, rate your performance as a trustee on the following scale:

- |                                      |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 6 = outstanding                      | 3 = needs improvement                           |
| 5 = very good                        | 2 = work has begun, but needs major improvement |
| 4 = satisfactory, for the time being | 1 = topic not yet on board's agenda             |

	I understand and support the school's mission.
	I monitor the progress of the school in its strategic plan.
	I assist in the fundraising efforts of the school.
	I give to the school commensurate with my financial circumstances.
	I read and understand the school's financial reports.
	I support and, as requested, advise the head of school.
	I take advantage of opportunities to enhance the school's public image.
	I recommend qualified individuals as possible nominees for the governing body.
	I participate in board training and development opportunities.
	I feel as though I can bring my full self to my work on the board.
	I read materials in advance of board and committee meetings.
	As appropriate, I suggest agenda items for committees and the governing board to consider.
	I avoid, in fact and perception, conflicts of interest that might jeopardize the school or its governing body.
	I participate in meaningful ways in board meetings.
	I respect the confidentiality of the board's executive sessions.
	I willingly volunteer to further the school's mission.
	I complete assignments in a responsible and timely manner.

**This part of the evaluation allows additional issues to be raised and comments on the performance of the board.**

What do you perceive to be the principal strengths of the school?

What are the key strengths of this governing body?

On what issues should the governing body concentrate in the next year?

In what areas could the governing body improve its performance?

In what areas do you feel you are most effective as a trustee?

In what areas do you feel least effective?

What would help you grow as a trustee?

Do you find your work as a trustee satisfying? In what ways?



# NYS AIS Evaluation and Accreditation

## Fire Safety Checklist

**NOTE:** *This checklist is meant to serve as a guide and is not meant to replace either local or state rules and regulations which might be applicable in this area.*

Category	Response	Comments
Is the alarm bell functioning properly in all areas?		
Is the alarm bell audible in all areas?		
Is the alarm bell flashing a light for the hard of hearing or deaf?		
Is the alarm bell turned off when the building is fully evacuated?		
Is evacuation in a calm, orderly, quiet fashion for both adults and students?		
Are all adults engaged in the process and aware that in the event of an emergency, they may have to take on additional responsibilities?		
Is there a staff fire duty assignment list?		
Do staff and students have knowledge of exit routes, including if a means of egress is blocked?		
Are there bottlenecks in exiting the building?		
What is the sweeping procedure?		
What is the procedure for accounting for all students and personnel after the facility is evacuated?		
If adults are out of hearing range of each other, what is the communication procedure?		
Fire extinguisher inspections—double check with the business manager if inspections seem outdated because frequently inspection has been done, but the fire department has not updated the certificates.		
Are fire doors equipped with crash bars and not propped or obstructed?		
Is there clear signage for exits? For extinguishers?		
Is the record of fire drills kept current? How is the sprinkler system inspected and are records kept? Are the fire pull stations tested on a regular basis, and who does this testing and are records kept?		



## NYS AIS Evaluation and Accreditation

### General Facility Safety Checklist

**NOTE:** *This checklist is meant to serve as a guide and is not meant to replace either local or state rules and regulations which might be applicable in this area.*

Category	Response	Comments
Are cleaning chemicals and other materials (e.g., wall paint) stored safely, with flammables stored separately and inaccessible to students?		
Are students wearing goggles when they are using power tools or when others in close proximity are using power tools?		
Does the gym or recreation area have safety paddings and nets?		
Are locker rooms sanitary?		
If the school has a swimming pool or weight/exercise room, is the area secure when no adult is present?		
Are first aid kits easily accessible to every classroom (can be as simple as a zip lock bag holding Band-Aids, antiseptic wipes, gloves, alcohol pads, disposable towels, and an extra plastic bag)?		
Are hallways and stairwells free from clutter, including book bags, books, musical instruments, coats, sports equipment, laptop computers, etc.?		
Are MSDSs (Material Safety Data Sheets) for all chemicals in the lab available and filed appropriately?		
Are students wearing goggles in science labs when they are handling chemicals or near others handling chemicals?		
Does each science lab include necessary safety equipment and does lab usage follow appropriate safety protocols?		

## Sample Parent/Guardian Survey Questions

As these are suggested prompts, the school must determine the appropriate questions for its own purposes. The most valuable questions will be those that provide the school with the most useful data to inform analysis and decision-making. Limiting the length of the survey will maximize the response rate. The format of the questions should be systematic so that all or most all are asking for a range of answers or might lend themselves to choosing from a range of options, as opposed to yes/no questions. For example, these questions may be adapted to elicit a response that asks for ratings of 1-6 consistent with the NYSAIS strategic criteria.

The raw data, or electronic access to the raw data, should be provided to the visiting committee along with other Supplementary Materials.

1. What are the most effective ways by which the school communicates with you?
2. To whom at the school do parents/guardians turn for routine information and help? How did you learn whom to contact? How easy is it to navigate through the various sources of information?
3. How clear and helpful to parents/guardians are student reports and the comments included with them?
4. How are regular conferences arranged between parents/guardians and the teachers and other school staff?
5. Is it easy and comfortable for parents/guardians to arrange a conference at times other than the regular ones?
6. Does the program of the school meet your expectations? Are you satisfied with the channels that exist for conveying concerns to the school?
7. How are the school's expectations regarding the appropriate conduct in the community of parents/guardians communicated and upheld?
8. What are the ways that parents/guardians support the values and ethics of the school? How well does the school share and communicate values and ethics with parents/guardians?
9. What part do parents/guardians play in promoting and supporting the school's culture?
10. How is the expectation that parents/guardians demonstrate a respect for and responsibility towards building and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community communicated?
11. What opportunities has the school provided for parent education (programs, speakers, etc.) regarding relevant educational, social, emotional, or physical development issues?
12. What diversity, equity, and inclusion offerings exist for parents/guardians?
13. What means has the school used to provide clear and effective information about the total cost of enrollment-tuition payments and the way that other charges (e.g., meal plans, books, sports apparel, etc.) are handled?
14. How does the school communicate what student services it can provide? How does it communicate what the school can provide within its walls at no additional cost?
15. Reflecting on to your child's admission, did the process and any other information from the school clarify your expectations with regard to (a) the admissions process itself, (b) the experience the student might have if he or she were to attend the school, and (c) the financial obligations? As the parent of a new student, what efforts did the school make to provide special information to you between the time of your child's acceptance and the end of the first year of school?

16. Do you have a written contract with the school covering financial obligations and understandings? What aspects of the written enrollment contract were the clearest and most beneficial? Which aspects were the least clear and beneficial?
17. What are the most common means for parents/guardians to support the school (financially, by referring potential families, volunteering, etc.)? How easy is it to find and join these efforts?
18. Describe ways in which the school's program reflects the school's mission.
19. How does the school educate parents/guardians about their involvement with their child's education that is both age and mission appropriate?

### Supplementary Materials • NYSAIS Manual for Evaluation and Accreditation

Section	<i>On-Site – either paper or digital</i>	<i>Include in or with the Self-Study Report</i>
One	<input type="checkbox"/> Copies of school brochures and any documents or links where the school's mission and purposes and objectives are formally published whether in full or in part.	<input type="checkbox"/> The school's mission statement and any other statements of purpose, core values, philosophy, and diversity used to support the mission.  <input type="checkbox"/> Ten pictures or five 30-second videos that richly convey the mission and culture of the school.
Two	<input type="checkbox"/> School calendar, class schedules, and other materials that illustrate how the school's educational vision is put into practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum descriptions and/or individual course outlines. <input type="checkbox"/> List of extracurricular or co-curricular offerings. <input type="checkbox"/> Papers, presentations, documents, posts or articles that have been written by school personnel that relate to the overall philosophy of the school. <input type="checkbox"/> A sample professional development plan for an administrator, teacher, or staff member.	
Three	<p><b>When appropriate, all documents will be kept confidential and treated on a need-to-know basis.</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the original Charter of Articles of Incorporation and as amended. <input type="checkbox"/> Policies regarding the evaluation, renewal, compensation, and support of the head of school. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the most recent conflict of interest statements for each member of the governing body. <input type="checkbox"/> All financial oversight policies such as investment, audit, budget-to-actuals, etc.	<p><b>To the Chair only:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the current by-laws of the governing body. <input type="checkbox"/> 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.) <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of current strategic or long-range planning documents.

	<input type="checkbox"/> Board agendas and board minutes for the past two years. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the board-approved policy for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and abuse.	
Four	<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions, financial aid, and recruiting materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Sample of current Enrollment Contract	<p><b>Documents to be provided IN ADVANCE to the visiting committee Chair and the designated committee member reviewing finances ONLY:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> The school's last two audited financial statements and management letters prepared by an independent certified public accountant. Include the management response to the auditor's management letter. <input type="checkbox"/> The current operating budget as well a copy of the long-range financial plan or budget projections. <input type="checkbox"/> The most recent year-to-date operating statement, showing budgeted income and expense compared to actual figures. <input type="checkbox"/> The operating statement for the most recently completed year, showing budgeted income and expense compared to actual figures. <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the process used for benchmarking highly compensated employees. <input type="checkbox"/> Sample copies of all most recent financial reports that the governing body regularly reviews. <input type="checkbox"/> IRS Form 990 and supporting schedules for the past two years.
Five	<input type="checkbox"/> Any faculty, administrator and/or non-teaching personnel surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Sample faculty and staff member employment contract or letter of agreement with the school setting forth the terms of employment <input type="checkbox"/> Sample faculty, administration and non-teaching assessment or evaluation tools and related documents <input type="checkbox"/> Short-term and long-term capital expenditure plan <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities Master Plan (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule for systematic maintenance of facilities and equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Report of the latest systematic review of safety issues and practices <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness plan(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Documents to show that facilities and personnel meet applicable local and state public safety and health regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Sample forms used to maintain permanent records of current and former employees <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate(s) of Occupancy (when required by ordinance) <input type="checkbox"/> Log of emergency drills	



	<input type="checkbox"/> Most recent fire inspection report <input type="checkbox"/> Sample forms used in the hiring process. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the fingerprinting and background check policy and procedures	
Six	<input type="checkbox"/> A list of any auxiliary programs as well as advisors/coordinators. <input type="checkbox"/> If there is a boarding program, provide a list of weekend activities for boarding students. <input type="checkbox"/> For each of the last three terminating classes, show where these students went following their final year at school (e.g. another school, college, vocation, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Samples of various forms used to collect or record information about students such as registration forms, application blanks, health forms, grade report forms, permanent record forms, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Any student climate surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Samples of regular parent/guardian communication and access to online communication. <input type="checkbox"/> The raw data, or electronic access to the raw data, of any parent/guardian surveys that have been conducted as part of this self-study process. <input type="checkbox"/> The Parent/Guardian Handbook as well as any additional document, if needed, to guide Homestay families. <input type="checkbox"/> Sample communication from the parent/guardian association (if applicable) and access to online communication. <input type="checkbox"/> Access to the parent/guardian association's by-laws, schedule of meetings, list of the officers, and class representatives (if applicable). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide samples of the various methods of communication such as newsletters, websites, literary magazines, viewbooks, student announcements, alums communication, etc.	
Seven	<input type="checkbox"/> DASL Accreditation Reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Signed Verification Statement



## NYS AIS Criteria for Evaluation and Accreditation Rating Sheet Manual 4.3

NYS AIS schools are evaluated in terms of their own mission and the NYS AIS Criteria for Accreditation, which are divided into Baseline (B) and Strategic (S) criteria. Each school, and later the visiting committee, will assign a “Yes” or “No” response to the Baseline Criteria and a rating of 1-6 to the Strategic Criteria. Any rating of “No” to the Baseline Criteria or 3 or below to the Strategic Criteria by the school should be accompanied by an explanation or reference to the school's self-study report.

- 6 = criterion fully and completely met
- 5 = criterion substantially met
- 4 = criterion generally met
- 3 = criterion generally not met
- 2 = criterion not met in significant respects
- 1 = criterion not met in any respect
- N/A = criterion not applicable

#	Criterion	School	Committee	Brief Comments
<b>Section 1: Mission and Culture</b>				
B-1.1	The mission statement has been reviewed within the past five years.			
S-1.1	The mission statement is clearly articulated and broadly available to all constituencies of the school community.			
S-1.2	The mission statement informs all decisions and programs and is reflected in the behavior of the trustees, employees, students, and families			
S-1.3	The school's commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion is evident in its work to create a respectful environment for all of its constituents.			
<b>Section 2: Teaching and Learning</b>				
B-2.1	The school provides a program of instruction that is substantially equivalent to that which is afforded in the local public schools.			
B-2.2	Courses are offered in mandated subjects.			
B-2.3	The school day and year are substantially equivalent to those in public schools.			
B-2.4	If the school has a secondary program, the school is registered by the New York State Education Department.			
S-2.1	The formal educational program is consistent with the mission and culture of the school.			
S-2.2	The values and best practices of equity, justice, and anti-bias are integrated into the educational program.			
S-2.3	The school demonstrates that its educational programs and practices are informed and evaluated by research.			
S-2.4	The school uses student demographic data (including but not limited to race and gender) to analyze student progress and engagement, and to assess and evaluate program effectiveness.			
S-2.5	The performance of individual students is regularly assessed by developmentally appropriate measures and effectively communicated to students, faculty, families, and administrators.			
S-2.6	The administration creates a culture of continued, sustained professional growth, offering in-service as well as outside professional development opportunities to all administrators,			

	faculty, and non-teaching personnel members, for which there is adequate funding.			
S-2.7	The professional development program for faculty, staff, and administrators develops and assesses competencies for promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and well-being.			
S-2.8	The administration has developed, communicated and implemented a program for the systematic evaluation of the faculty administrators, and staff that aligns with professional development goals including those in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion.			
S-2.9	The school has a program that respects and supports the intellectual, social, physical, artistic, developmental, and emotional needs of every student.			
S.2.10	Consistent with the school's pedagogical practices, digital technology is used to support the program and its use is evaluated on a regular basis.			
S-2.11	The school collects information from its alums to assess its educational program.			
S-2.12	Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are aligned with the mission and resources of the school.			
S-2.13	If applicable, the school has a carefully planned and supervised program of auxiliary or off-campus activities that is harmonious with the school's mission.			
	<b>Section 3: Governance</b>			
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.			
B-3.6	The governing body has approved a written policy for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and abuse.			
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 is responsible for establishing broad school policies and appropriately delegates responsibility for the operations of the school to the head of school.			
S-3.7	The governing body ensures that the head of school receives appropriate support, evaluation, and compensation.			
S-3.8	The governing body ensures that financial resources are provided for the school.			

S-3.9	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-3.10	The governing body understands its central role in institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.			
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 has made a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion which is explicit in the school's policies and procedures.			
S-3.14	The governing body's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is reflected in the training, recruitment, and retention of trustees.			
S-3.15	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.			
<b>Section 4: Financial Sustainability</b>				
B-4.1	The administration carries out appropriate follow-up to the annual audit of all financial records and the management letter.			
B-4.2	The administration has appropriate procedures and personnel in place and accounts for all assets and liabilities in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).			
B-4.3	The administration has a clearly articulated commitment to school-wide, non-discriminatory practices.			
B-4.4	The administration determines eligibility for admission based on the merits of the application and then determines how to allocate financial aid resources to fulfill the mission of the school and meet student needs.			
S-4.1	The board of trustees, head of school, and finance officer work collaboratively and strategically to ensure the development and implementation of appropriate policies and practices for the sustainable long-term management of the school.			
S-4.2	The administration manages the school's resources in a prudent manner, consistent with the mission, safeguarding the value of those assets for the use of future generations of students.			
S-4.3	The administration implements sound financial and management practices and procedures, including the development of an annual operating and capital budget, multi-year budget projections, and the execution of an annual audit.			
S-4.4	The process for determining compensation for administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel reflect independent and/or local school standards as well as meet all legal requirements and is reviewed for potential inequity and bias.			
S-4.5	Salaries and benefits are communicated clearly to individual employees.			
S-4.6	The administration has a clear picture of its long- and short-term institutional development needs as well as the organizational structure, resources, and staffing to carry out its efforts.			
S-4.7	The admission process operates under a clear set of practices for gathering, disseminating, and maintaining prospective			

	student information, and respects the confidentiality of students, families, and documents.			
S-4.8	Admissions policies and procedures ensure that the composition of the student body advances the mission of the school and reflects a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.			
S-4.9	Prior to making an enrollment offer, the administration follows a clear and transparent admission and financial aid process that communicates information, dates, timeframes, as well as all financial obligations for attending the school.			
S-4.10	The relationship between student enrollment and the number of administrators, faculty, and non-teaching personnel is at an appropriate level for the financial sustainability of the school and the successful operation of its program.			
<b>Section 5: Operations</b>				
B-5.1	The administration and staff have developed materials, routines, training sessions, and procedures, for both on- and off-campus activities, to foster a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment for all members of the school community.			
B-5.2	To support the needs of the children and goals of the program, the administration and staff provide appropriate equipment and instructional play and work spaces.			
B-5.3	The school has safety and attendance procedures in place for students and adults in the event of fire or other emergencies.			
B-5.4	A plan is in place for the long-term protection and renewal of physical plant and facilities.			
B-5.5	The school maintains accurate, complete, and secure records protected against catastrophic loss.			
B-5.6	Appropriate attendance records are kept and are on file.			
B-5.7	The administration fingerprints all new employees.			
S-5.1	The administration provides leadership in, and appropriate evaluation of, the implementation of the mission, standards, and policies of the school.			
S-5.2	The school develops, communicates, and implements plans for the supervision, safety, and health of students.			
S-5.3	The administration has developed and implemented clear, written, consistently applied hiring, termination, and record retention procedures.			
S-5.4	The administration has taken steps to identify and, if identified, remedy bias in hiring and provides equitable opportunities for promotion and leadership development to all employees.			
S-5.5	Faculty and non-teaching personnel assignments are appropriate and equitable across key demographics in terms of teaching conditions, total load, methods, and duties.			
S-5.6	Staff members are qualified by education, training, or experience for the responsibilities to which they are assigned.			
S-5.7	The administration has developed, communicated, and implemented a program for the systematic evaluation of all administrators and non-teaching personnel.			
S-5.8	The physical facilities and equipment are adequately maintained.			
S-5.9	The administration and staff provide channels of communication with parents/guardians and members of the school community that are sufficient and consistent with the purposes and objectives of the school.			

S-5.10	The administration and staff employ methods of communicating with the external community that are appropriate to the school's size, means, culture, and mission.			
<b>Section 6: Student Life and Community</b>				
B-6.1	The school has created, implemented, and communicated written policies, procedures, and educational programs to protect the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of all students.			
B-6.2	The program for health care, including nutrition, is adequate to meet the needs of the students and accounts for the prevention and care of illness and injury.			
S-6.1	Within the context of the school's mission, resources, and legal obligations, the administration and faculty provide equal and equitable access to a full school experience for all students.			
S-6.2	The school uses various methods to regularly assess students' emotional health and development and uses this information to analyze and improve, where necessary, the collective experience of its students.			
S-6.3	Within the context of the school's mission, resources, and legal obligations, the administration and faculty provide equal and equitable access for all students.			
S-6.4	The school uses various methods to regularly assess students' emotional health and development and uses this information to analyze and improve, where necessary, the collective experience of its students.			
S-6.5	The administration and faculty have developed and implemented a program for orienting and mentoring all members new to the school community.			
S-6.6	Consistent with the mission and educational program, the guidance, counseling, and learning services and support programs meet student needs and support the expression of diverse experiences.			
S-6.7	The administration provides clear, mission-driven expectations regarding participation of parents/guardians in the school community.			
S-6.8	Participation by parents/guardians in the school community is mission-appropriate.			
S-6.9	The school's mission informs and guides interactions with the local community to enhance relationships and student experiences.			
<b>For schools with boarding or homestay programs.</b>				
B-6.3	Schools enrolling homestay students develop and implement guidelines that provide a student experience that is in keeping with the mission of the school, including the NYS AIS Best Practices for Equity and Justice.			
S-6.10	The administration and staff have developed an intentional boarding and/or homestay program that is a unified and equitable part of the total life of the school for both boarding and day students.			
S-6.11	The administration and staff provide clear expectations and guidance so that students develop respectful, cooperative, and meaningful relationships with those with whom they live and interact.			
S-6.12	The administration and staff have provided guidelines for the evening, weekend, and vacation offerings that are consistent with the mission of the school and the needs of the students.			
S-6.13	Thoughtful procedures are in place for the appropriate placement and monitoring of students in either dormitory or homestay situations.			

<b>Section 7: Self Study Process, Reflection and Conclusion</b>				
B-7.1	The school has completed and submitted the required Verification Statement.			
S-7.1	The school has completed a thorough self-evaluation at all levels in accordance with the procedures outlined by NYSAIS.			
<b>Verification Statement</b>				
<b>On an ongoing basis, as well as part of the NYSAIS accreditation process, the board of trustees, and administration for each school are expected to regularly conduct a review of their compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to:</b>				
V-1.1	The school's charter granted by the State Board of Regents and any applicable regulations of the Commissioner of Education.	See Signed Verification Statement		
V-1.2	The New York State Not-For-Profit Corporations Law, including the Non-Profit Revitalization Act of 2013, as amended.			
V-1.3	Child abuse reporting requirements.			
V-1.4	New York State Education Law.			
V-1.5	Local, state, and federal civil rights and anti-discrimination requirements.			
V-1.6	The Handbooks, Manuals, and Guidelines provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for non-public schools operating in the State of New York.			
V-1.7	Applicable state and local transportation laws.			
V-1.8	State and local requirements for pupil immunizations, exemptions, and recordkeeping.			
V-1.9	Fire codes and certificate of occupancy requirements.			
V-1.10	State and local health codes.			
V-1.11	Where applicable, specific social service laws and health regulations for early childhood programs.			







## GLOSSARY

### **Accreditation**

Verification that a school has been held accountable to a rigorous process of inclusive self-evaluation and outside peer assessment using recognized standards.

### **Administration**

Those responsible for the management of all school operations, from the educational program to the budget.

### **Advancement**

The process of building awareness and support of the school from all constituents, including development, public relations, and government relations.

### **Affinity Group**

A gathering of people who all share a similar identity with the intention of finding connection, support, and inspiration together.

### **Assessment**

The various methods and/or tools that are used to evaluate, measure, monitor, observe, and document the progress, readiness, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students such as formal exams, observations, or written narrative reports.

### **Attrition**

A calculation of the number of people (students, families, employees) who leave the school over a specified time frame.

### **Audit**

An official, methodical, and unbiased examination and evaluation of a school's accounts, internal controls, and overall financial situation, conducted by an independent third-party CPA who is neither trustee nor employed by the school.

### **Anti-bias**

To work against prejudice, inclination, and preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

### **Baseline Criteria**

Criteria for Accreditation that are rated by the school and visiting committee on a yes/no basis, which typically deal with items of compliance with best practices, regulations, or laws.

**Belonging**

The degree of acceptance, respect, inclusion, and support personally experienced by every member of the community.

**Benchmark**

A standard or reference by which others can be measured or judged.

**Co-curricular**

School activities that fall outside of the academic curriculum but complement the regular curriculum.

**Dashboard**

A data visualization tool that can be used to monitor financial indicators or to illustrate progress towards goals. Dashboards can be shared with stakeholders to help familiarize them with the school's impact, scope, or financial position. Some dashboards illustrate change over time, such as enrollment numbers; others offer a snapshot of a situation, such as the current status of cash flow.

**DASL**

Data and Analysis for School Leadership (DASL) is an online tool for independent schools managed by NAIS that can be used to find actionable data related to all aspects of school operations, including admission, enrollment, salaries, and more. In DASL, NYSAIS member schools can run benchmarking reports comparing internal data to national or regional data, or to a customized comparison group of schools.

**Data**

Any factual information (such as measurements or statistics) that is used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation. Quantitative data are numbers-based, countable, or measurable. Qualitative data are interpretation-based, descriptive, and relating to language.

**Diversity**

The state of being composed of differing qualities, including a wide range of human characteristics such as ethnicity, race, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender, class, religion, and ability.

**Demographic**

The statistical characteristics of a human population, such as ability, age, ethnicity, family makeup, gender, international/citizenship status, learning style, linguistic difference, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

**Equity**

The state in which individual members of the school community have what they need to participate fully in school life and reach their full potential. Equity work involves the elimination of barriers that prevent the full participation of all individuals in essential educational programs, services, activities, and technologies.

**Extracurricular**

School-based activities that are not tied to the curriculum.

## **Fiduciary Responsibility**

A relationship, imposed by law, in which an individual has voluntarily agreed to act in the capacity of a caretaker of another's rights, assets, and/or well-being. When one acts as a trustee of a school, there is a fiduciary responsibility owed to the school.

## **Financial Assistance**

Any official help offered to aid a family to pay for the cost of attendance. Types of financial assistance include need-based financial aid, merit awards, payment plans, loan programs, and tuition remission.

## **Financial Sustainability**

The ability of a school to carry out its mission in a fiscally effective manner both in the present as well as in the future.

## **Gender**

A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other. Words and qualities ascribed to these traits vary across cultures. (per [Learning for Justice](#)).

**Gender Expression** is how a person presents their gender on the outside, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, or body characteristics. Some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don't identify with any gender. People whose gender is outside the gender binary use many different terms to describe themselves, with **non-binary** being one of the most common. (per the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#))

## **Gender Identity**

One's inner knowledge of gender. For example, one's knowledge that you are a woman, a man, a boy, a girl, or another gender. (per the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#))

## **Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)**

Standards for the complexities and legalities of accounting. GAAP compliance makes the financial reporting process transparent and standardizes assumptions, terminology, definitions, and methods.

## **Governing Body**

The group of people (often referred to as the Board of Trustees or Directors) who set the school's strategic direction and direct the affairs of the school in partnership with the administration.

## **Inclusion**

The practice or process of expanding access, involvement, and participation to include all members of a community in ways that cultivate a sense of belonging, support, and co-creation.

## **Internal Controls**

A process, effected by the school's board of trustees, administration, and other personnel, that is designed to provide reasonable assurance that financial information is reliable, accurate, and timely, compliant with applicable laws, and policies, and that procedures are in place to mitigate corruption and loss.

**Management Letter**

A requirement of NYSAIS membership, this formal document is prepared by the school's auditor to provide the board and administration with an independent assessment of the school's internal controls.

**Mandated Reporter**

Certain professionals, recognized by the State of New York, who require training to report suspicions of child neglect and abuse to the relevant authorities. See the [OCFS website](#) for more information.

**Mission Statement**

A succinct summary of a school's core purpose. Some mission statements may include other elements, such as references to how the school achieves its impact or what it most values.

**Policy**

A guiding principle, formally adopted by the board or administration, that is used to outline practices and procedures within the school.

**Procedure**

A series of steps to be followed consistently as an approach to accomplish an end result.

**Professional Development**

Any participation in classes, seminars, webinars, conferences, apprenticeships, or mentoring relationships that has the potential to promote the growth of skills, competencies, and capacities of an employee of a school.

**Registered High School**

Eligible high schools complete a registration process with the New York State Office of Religious and Independent Schools (SORIS) to allow them the privilege to issue valid New York State diplomas and administer Regents examinations. Schools are registered through the University of the State of New York and must be approved by the Board of Regents. See the [NYSED website](#) for more information.

**Strategic Criteria**

Criteria for Accreditation that are rated by the school and visiting committee on a scale of 1-6, with 1 meaning that the criterion is not met in any respect and 6 meaning the criterion is fully and completely met.

**Substantial Equivalency**

A term from New York State law that relates to compliance with New York State requirements. See the [NYSED website](#) for more information.

**Verification Statement**

An attestation, signed by the head of school and board chair, that the school is in compliance with the relevant laws, regulations, and requirements.