



Accreditation Guidebook

Fall 2017

ACCREDITATION FOR THE FUTURE

SAIS ACCREDITATION

SAIS accreditation remains one of the most sought after accreditation models for high quality independent schools. The process is based on the three key components – adherence to SAIS standards, a self-study that illustrates the school’s planning and how it holds itself accountable to that planning, and a visit from peers.

Think of the process as three interconnected spheres that come together to form a complete picture.



THREE SPHERES OF SAIS ACCREDITATION

- Compliance: Adhere to community and research based standards.
- Growth: Conduct a thorough self-study that leads to institutional goals for strengthening mission fulfillment.
- Review: Host an external review from peer educational leaders.



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This guidebook is designed to provide important information and direction to SAIS member schools as they undertake accreditation.

The accreditation process is designed to serve the needs of the school. It focuses on continuous growth and provides the opportunity to engage the entire school community in a thoughtful discussion centered on the school's unique mission.

Although this document is meant to be comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. Please use it as a guide and timeline for scheduling and completing the steps toward accreditation. Participating schools should feel free to communicate and work directly with SAIS through each of the stages.

I trust that this process will be beneficial to your school and to the community that you serve. Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirk Walker'.

Kirk Walker, Ph.D.
President, SAIS

The accreditation team at SAIS is very happy to be able to assist as you move through your accreditation efforts. Please feel free to contact us with questions you may have as they arise and difficulties as they occur. The process is designed to be rigorous and fulfilling and we are here to provide guidance and direction along the way.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Andruscavage'.

Joanne Andruscavage
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STANDARD 1: Mission

The school commits to a mission that leads to continuous improvement for teaching and learning.

An SAIS accredited school's mission guides decision-making, allocation of resources, and the building of community.

STANDARD 2: Governance and Leadership

The school provides a governance, leadership, and organizational structure that promotes its mission.

In an SAIS accredited school, trustees and administrators clearly understand their roles and are advocates for the school's mission, vision, and continuous improvement. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders.

STANDARD 3: Teaching and Learning

The school provides a curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement of all students in support of its mission.

An SAIS accredited school provides a curriculum that reflects best practices, strategies, and activities. The curriculum includes clearly defined expectations for student development that are subject to review and revision at regular intervals.

STANDARD 4: Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

The school develops and maintains effective communication and relationships to further its mission.

An SAIS accredited school communicates clearly and accurately with its stakeholders and encourages collaboration to further its mission.

STANDARD 5: Resources and Support Systems

The school has the resources, services, and policies necessary to support its mission.

An SAIS accredited school has sufficient human and material resources, employs a qualified and competent staff, and provides ongoing professional development. The school has well-defined and communicated policies and procedures to promote a safe, healthy, and orderly environment.

The commentary in italics after each indicator and the suggested evidence is provided to help you assemble the appropriate artifacts as you respond to the indicators in writing and prepare for your chair and visiting team. They are by no means exhaustive nor do they represent restrictions placed on schools as they creatively address their operational efficiencies. In responding to indicators, the school must indicate that it believes itself to be in compliance with the indicator, provide a description of HOW the school complies, and provide evidence or artifacts that support its claim.

STANDARD 1: MISSION

The school commits to a mission that leads to continuous improvement for teaching and learning.

An SAIS accredited school's mission guides decision-making, allocation of resources, and the building of community.

STANDARD 1 – INDICATORS:

- 1.1 Establishes in collaboration with its stakeholders a mission for the school that guides all planning and decision-making and ensures the mission is congruent with principles of academic scholarship; permitting and encouraging freedom of inquiry, diversity of viewpoints, and academic independent, critical thinking.**

The mission of the school is an essential written foundation on which all programs and organizational structures are based. The mission statement should be reflected in all offerings, activities, and personnel within the school. The mission statement is what sets a school apart from others. It is a statement of the unique culture of the school. It permeates the school in places such as the beginning of the school's charter or bylaws, in its handbooks and viewbooks, in its admissions materials, on the walls of classrooms and offices, and in the minds and hearts of the entire school community.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws
- Handbooks
- Admissions materials
- Website

- 1.2 Assures that goals are aligned with and advance the mission of the school.**

The goals should be aligned with and reflective of the mission of the school and congruent with all aspirations that guide SAIS member schools. Examples of such alignment can typically be found in the school's strategic plan, its self-study, minutes of meetings about school policy and administrative/faculty decisions, etc. Schools should ask themselves, "Will this goal help us carry out and fulfill our mission?"

Evidence may include:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Minutes which include policy decisions

- 1.3 Ensures the beliefs and mission guide the instruction and curriculum throughout the school and reflect research and best practices concerning teaching and learning.**

Regular discussions about educational philosophy, developmental psychology, and organizational design should clearly reference the mission. Debate about new directions or new methods of teaching/learning should evidence consideration of the mission.

Evidence may include:

- Minutes from meetings of divisions, departments, administration
- Professional growth opportunities
- In-service programs

1.4 Regularly reviews its mission and revises when appropriate.

A forceful, vital mission requires that schools and their governing boards review the mission statement periodically. Without regular review and reconsideration, a mission can become nothing more than a historical landmark in the school's existence. This indicator should not be taken as an expectation that the mission statement will be changed each year; many remain useful for decades. But missions do require maintenance and careful consideration if they are to influence the work of the school. The intervals and timing for such review are up to the school.

Evidence may include:

- Minutes from focus groups or trustee meetings that indicate stakeholder input
- Note that each school defines the meaning of the word "regular" as it relates to the indicator and the school's own unique culture

1.5 Provides evidence that no form of bias or prejudice is allowed or practiced within the mission scope of the school in order to promote an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect and value diversity.

This indicator ensures that all SAIS schools model equity and justice in their daily practices, in their recruiting approaches, and in their curriculum.

Evidence may include:

- Evidence of nondiscrimination policies in handbooks, website, employment information, student applications, school publications

Documents Relative to Standard 1:

NOTE: This is an abbreviated list of documents taken from the indicators. The absence of documents marked by an asterisk may delay the accreditation process.

****Evidence of nondiscrimination policies in handbooks, website, employment information, student applications, school publications****

Other documents listed with the indicators for Standard 1:

- Evidence of regular mission statement review
- Description of how mission drives decision making at the school
- Bylaws
- Handbooks
- Admissions materials
- Survey / focus group results
- Minutes from meetings of divisions, departments, administration
- Professional growth opportunities
- In-service programs

STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

The school provides a governance, leadership, and organizational structure that promotes its mission.

In an SAIS accredited school, trustees and administrators clearly understand their roles and are advocates for the school's mission, vision, and continuous improvement. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders.

STANDARD 2 – INDICATORS:

2.1 Operates within the jurisdiction of a governance structure or civil authority and, when necessary, has a charter, license, or permit to operate within that jurisdiction.

Schools will operate independently with the necessary charter, license or permit as required by the relevant jurisdiction. Schools that function under the authority of another 501(c)(3) authority, such as an ecclesiastical bishop or national organization, or as a proprietary school must show the location of evidence that such authority has been delegated to the school.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws
- Articles of Incorporation
- Copies of license or permits
- Documents that show the authority of the governing board

2.2 Complies with all applicable statutes and governmental regulations.

The school will comply with applicable statutes and governmental regulations (federal, state, local) including those related to programs for young children. It should be remembered that noncompliance with some regulations could put the school in legal and financial jeopardy.

Schools offering extended day programs and/or serving children younger than (senior) kindergarten shall provide evidence that they know and meet applicable state statutes and requirements related to pre-k programs. Typically, a state agency prescribes regulations for these programs and schools may or may not qualify for exemptions. To be considered for SAIS accreditation, these programs must be part of the overall school program and included in the school's standards compliance and self-study and must be operating in full compliance with the state agency and/or must demonstrate exemption from regulation.

Evidence may include:

- Documents in adherence to fire, safety, and health codes
- Safety checklists from local, regional, national sources
- Extended care and day care regulations or exemption certificates
- Documentation of annual training of all faculty and staff in identifying and reporting suspected sexual abuse

2.3 Obtains necessary information about the legal requirements and obligations that exist in the state, federal, or other jurisdictions in which it operates.

Leaders in a school should demonstrate that they have access to the information regarding legal requirements necessary to operate a school. The name(s), affiliations, and relationships should be indicated in the school records.

Evidence may include:

- Names and contact information for school attorney and accountant
- Name and contact information for Department of Child Protective Services
Evidence of faculty training as required for CPR, first aid, CPS, etc.
- Documentation of annual training of all faculty and staff in identifying and reporting suspected sexual abuse

2.4 Establishes by its governing process policies to ensure no conflict of interest between businesses, professional or parental roles and duties to the school.

No economic or other advantage must come to a trustee (or employee) because of his or her role or affiliation with the school. Board members should not participate in discussions that relate to conflicts of interest involving their businesses, or themselves, or their family relationships. Annual signed consent forms, orientation, and on-going training are typical methods of demonstrating adherence.

Evidence may include:

- Conflict of Interest statements signed by all trustees and key employees
- Policy statements regarding conflicts of interest, recusal, or contract bidding and awarding processes

2.5 Assures that the governance structure supports and models inclusive decision-making methods.

A governance best practice is for boards to follow procedures during meetings that allow for open and confidential conversations; and likewise to develop protocols to speak as one voice outside of meetings.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws and meeting minutes
- Evidence of board training related to decision making
- Descriptions of successful decision-making processes

2.6 Assures that the governance structure establishes comprehensive monitoring of overall school policies.

The governing board establishes regular methods for monitoring policies while balancing the need for the managers of the school to address day-to-day concerns.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws
- Agenda items
- Board meeting minutes
- Description of monitoring method
- Board policy manual

2.7 The school engages in formal and regular strategic thinking and planning aligned with its vision, mission, and beliefs and provides for the continuity of mission.

Evidence of visioning and planning must be made clear and a current strategic plan must exist and be available for review. A strategic planning process that is mission-driven, comprehensive of all facets of the school, and inclusive of representatives of all stakeholder groups, could serve as the basis for the school's self-study and school report as a required component for accreditation.

Evidence may include:

- Copy of the school's strategic plan
- Minutes of planning and visioning meetings, retreats, etc.

2.8 Assures that the governance structure provides for stability in transitions of leadership.

Orderly succession planning and practice helps to ensure the continuity of mission. Succession plans should account for board member and board leadership transitions as well as head of school transition.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws, policies, etc. that describe succession planning procedures
- Meeting minutes that demonstrate discussions of succession planning

2.9 Assures that the governance structure clearly defines roles and responsibilities for board members and the head of school, and provides procedures for: orientation; continuous growth, renewal and training; and evaluation of both the board and the head of school.

Clear evidence of distinction between the roles of the board and head of school is required.

Evidence may include:

- Bylaws and policies
- Handbook and evidence of ongoing training
- Head of school evaluation procedure
- Board evaluation procedure

2.10 Has an organizational structure that includes separate entities that carry out the distinct functions of governance and day-to-day management.

The school employs best practices in determining the roles of the board and the head of school. Typical responsibilities of the governing board include: employ, nurture, support, and evaluate the administrative head of the school; manage the investments and commission the audit of the school; assume fiduciary responsibility for the school; set policy for the school. Typical day-to-day responsibilities of the administrative head of school include: oversight of personnel, curriculum (as well as extra and co-curricular offerings), student life, and administration of the approved budget. Policy manuals, employment documents, bylaws, admissions materials, Board Handbook statements can be used to demonstrate adherence to this indicator.

Evidence may include:

- Board bylaws and policies
- Meeting minutes that include reports from school administration
- Evidence of ongoing board training

- 2.11 Establishes policies and procedures that recognize and preserve the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the managers of the school and assures that the governance structure does not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the school.**

The school demonstrates a clear distinction between policy and management.

Evidence may include:

- Board bylaws and policies
- Evidence of ongoing board training
- Annual evaluation of the head of school

- 2.12 Assures that the administrative head of the school allocates and aligns the human, instructional, financial, and physical resources in support of the vision, mission, and beliefs of the school. The head of school shall have responsibility for the expenditure of all funds raised in the name of the school by booster clubs and other related organizations of students, parents, alumni, or supporters.**

Provide evidence of alignment of allocation of funds and mission of the school. Ensure that the administrative head of the school has the authority to manage the school's board approved budget. Ensure that all entities of the school that raise funds operate under the authority of the administrative head of school.

Evidence may include:

- Annual school budget
- Annual audit
- School policy manual
- Strategic plan

- 2.13 Assures that the governing body provides adequate risk management policies for the protection of the school and adequate documentation of insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations from protracted proceedings and claims for damage.**

Descriptions of risk management practices and policies, copies of insurance policies, agreements with pro bono or retained counsel, description of equivalent resources are possible resources to documents adherence.

Evidence may include:

- Emergency/crisis management plan (see Indicator 5.13)
- Insurance documents
- Policies that describe safety procedures
- Contact information for school attorney

- 2.14 Assures that debt service or lines of credit are managed in such ways as to ensure that fiscal responsibility remains under the control of the governing authority.**

The school maintains and enforces policies, which ensure fiscal responsibility.

Evidence may include:

- Audit with clear management letter (see Indicator 2.17)
- Bylaws and meeting minutes which describe policies and enforcement procedures
- Copy of filed tax documents (typically IRS Form 990)
- Meeting minutes which include board approval of audit

2.15 Assures that the school is not in, nor in prospect of moving into, financial reorganization under the protection of bankruptcy.

The school operates without excessive debt and within a balanced budget for more than one year.

Evidence may include:

- Annual audit
- Financial statements from prior year
- Current school budget
- Balance sheet
- Description of cash flow and lines of credit

2.16 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and plans for improvement and maintains a plan to fund a maintenance reserve.

The financial reports of the school must be made available to the visiting team while on the campus. The evidence of a reserve fund in place indicates that the school takes this need seriously and although there is not a specific amount to be set aside, fiscally prudent and sound schools provide for future maintenance or programmatic needs based on the school's financial capacity, its physical plant size and age, and the complexity of its programs.

Evidence may include:

- Current year financial statements and budget
- Meeting minutes and/or descriptions of alignment of strategic plan and annual budget

2.17 Maintains its accounts in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Its accounts are reviewed or audited annually by an independent licensed accountant. A full audit is conducted in the year before the visit.

Business manuals, procedure handbooks, a copy of the audit, board minutes accepting the audit, etc. can provide evidence of this. To be in compliance, a school must hold a full audit for the fiscal year as close as possible to their accreditation visit (usually the year immediately prior) and minimally reviews in the intervening years. "Independent" means not an employee of the school. It is a best practice to conduct audits annually.

Evidence may include:

- Audit with management letter; evidence of off-year reviews or audits
- Interview with finance committee, finance manager, financial procedures handbook

Documents Relative to Standard 2:

NOTE: This is an abbreviated list of documents taken from the indicators. The absence of documents marked by an asterisk may delay the accreditation process.

Governance Documents

- **Bylaws**
- **Board policy manual**
- **Articles of incorporation**
- **Strategic plan**
- **Head of school evaluation procedure**
- **Board development plan and evaluation procedure**
- **Conflict of interest statements signed by all trustees and key employees**

Facility and Safety Documents (see also Standard 5)

- **Licenses or permits for the school to operate (if required in your municipality, city, or state)**
- **Documents demonstrating adherence to fire, safety, and health codes**
- **Documentation of annual training of all faculty and staff in identifying and reporting suspected sexual abuse**
- **Safety checklists from local, regional, national sources**
- **Extended care and day care license or exemption from license**
- **Risk management plans (including, but not limited to: vehicle safety, requirements for drivers, chemical handling and storage, preventative maintenance and inspections, field trips, sports programs, outside contractors, use of facilities)
- **Insurance documents**

Financial Documents – must be available, not required to be uploaded

- **Annual school budget**
- **Financial audit**
- **Current financial statements: financial position, activities, cash flow**
- **Description of lines of credit**
- **Copy of filed tax documents (typically IRS Form 990)**

Other documents listed with the indicators for Standard 2:

- Names and contact information for school attorney and accountant
- Name and contact information for Department of Child Protective Services
- Documents that show the authority of the governing board
- Policy statements regarding conflicts of interest, recusal, or contract bidding and awarding processes
- Evidence of board training related to decision making
- Descriptions of successful decision-making processes
- Bylaws, board meeting agenda items
- Description of monitoring method
- Board policy manual
- Minutes of planning and visioning meetings, retreats, etc.
- Bylaws, policies, etc. that describe succession planning procedures
- Meeting minutes that demonstrate discussions of succession planning
- Handbook and evidence of ongoing training
- Evidence of ongoing board training
- Financial procedures handbook
- Meeting minutes which include board approval of audit
- Policies that describe safety procedures (see Standard 5)

STANDARD 3: TEACHING & LEARNING

The school provides a curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement of all students in support of its mission.

An SAIS accredited school provides a curriculum that reflects best practices, strategies, and activities. The curriculum includes clearly defined expectations for student development that are subject to review and revision at regular intervals.

STANDARD 3 – INDICATORS:

3.1 Develops and aligns the curriculum and instructional design with the school’s mission and expectations for student performance.

The visiting team will be looking for evidence that the curriculum and instructional methods are aligned with student expectations and the mission of the school. The mission language should show up often in minutes or official notes of division meetings and in the descriptions of how the school organizes its instructional program to accomplish its objectives.

Evidence may include:

- Curriculum guides
- Scope and sequence
- Lesson plans
- Syllabi
- Minutes of grade level, department, division meetings
- Professional development opportunities

3.2 Designs curriculum to encourage students to reach their potential.

Encouraging students to reach their potential may suggest a comprehensive academic program and co-curricular activities, differentiation, AP, Honors, IB programs, dual enrollment, or a myriad of other opportunities and approaches. Independent schools commit to the uniqueness of students and have designed curriculum with individuals in mind.

Evidence may include:

- Curriculum guides
- List of course offerings
- Academic profile
- School calendar
- List of co-curricular offerings
- College acceptances

3.3 Provides for articulation and alignment across all subject areas and levels of schools.

The visiting team will be looking for evidence in conversations and written statements and curriculum guides about the coordination of the teaching and learning philosophy of the school. Cohesive mission language should show up often in minutes or official notes of instructional and curriculum meetings and in the descriptions of how the school organizes its instructional program to accomplish its objectives.

Evidence may include:

- Instructional and curriculum meeting minutes/notes
Curriculum maps or scope and sequence
- In-service agendas

3.4 Implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning.

There are numerous approaches to expectations for student learning. These expectations should be understood by all and should be enumerated, as best as possible in admission materials, handbooks, curriculum guides, etc. and should be the subject of minutes of faculty or department meetings. Note that this curriculum must be implemented.

Evidence may include:

- Curriculum guides
- Syllabi and lesson plans
- Instructional and curriculum meeting minutes/notes
- School website
- Admissions materials

3.5 Emphasizes elements of collaboration and collegiality that include honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, and respect for others.

Evidence of these attributes in the mission, objectives, program, curriculum, co-curricular activities, and the overall culture among staff and students are useful pieces of information. Surveys can provide an important means of assessing the effectiveness of the school's efforts to emphasize these elements.

Evidence may include:

- Surveys
- Character or leadership programs
- Team building activities among faculty and/or students
- Advisory meetings
- Student council agendas/minutes

3.6 Schedules instructional time to support student learning.

Apart from requirements of state law, such time should be evident in the scheduling documents for the school.

Evidence may include:

- Daily/weekly schedules
- School calendar

- 3.7 Plans a mission appropriate academic calendar with a minimum of 170 days, or more if required by state law, during which students and teachers engage in teaching/learning activities (Note: for half-day kindergarten programs, one-half day is equivalent to one full day in meeting the 170 day standard).**

Evidence of compliance with state law is adequate, along with a copy of the school's calendar. Note that although state law differs, generally the requirement is a minimum of the equivalent of 180 days of instruction at 4-6.5 hours per day (720-1170 total hours).

Evidence may include:

- School calendar
- State law

- 3.8 Assures that the curriculum relies on sound learning principles, based on relevant research and provides a mission appropriate, well-balanced variety of educational experiences for all students.**

The heart and soul of a school is teaching and learning and its commitment to engaging the relevant research regarding teaching and learning. In-service programs, professional development, and/or other faculty seminars can assure attention to these principles and experiences.

Evidence may include:

- In-service agendas
- Professional development opportunities for faculty/staff
- Curriculum meeting minutes/notes

- 3.9 Assures that the curriculum promotes the active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities to explore application of higher order thinking skills and to investigate new approaches in applying learning.**

The school must provide examples (written and/or observable) of such activities.

Evidence may include:

- Lesson plans
- Lists of programs/course offerings
- Use of rubrics, essential questions

- 3.10 Assures ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive library/media collection integrated to support learning goals.**

While differences and limitations may exist in the volume of technology or resources a school is able to obtain, the salient feature of this indicator is how instructional technology and media/library resources are being used to enhance and support learning goals.

Evidence may include:

- Technology plan
- Media/resources plan
- Operating budget related to this indicator

3.11 Assures that the school has a policy and procedure for responding to challenged materials.

Modern challenged materials may include books, websites, art, social media, etc. Operational guidelines for addressing a variety of situations in a mission appropriate manner should exist.

Evidence may include:

- Handbooks
- Description of challenge process
- Technology acceptable use policy
- Technology plan

3.12 Provides a comprehensive system for assessing student progress based on clearly defined student results for learning.

Curriculum guides, benchmarking assessments, report cards, standardized tests, progress reports, and rubrics can provide a framework for assessment. Knowing each student individually is a hallmark of independent education.

Evidence may include:

- Standardized tests or other regular assessments
- Progress reports
- “Mission Skills Assessment” rubrics
- Curriculum guides
- Report cards, portfolio assessments

3.13 Uses assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes.

Examples of documented uses of data for student placement, teacher preparation, and curriculum adjustments are sources of evidence.

Evidence may include:

- Analysis of student assessments through curriculum and instructional meeting minutes/notes
- Adjustments in placement, teacher preparation, curriculum are documented in the above meeting minutes/notes

3.14 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance.

“Systematic” may include an analysis of surveys and focus groups, assessment data, benchmarking studies, teaching and learning profiles, etc. Regular reviews (by semester or annually or other) in appropriate groups (division, grade level, or other) and the results of those reviews could provide evidences of compliance.

Evidence may include:

- Curriculum and instructional meeting minutes/notes
- Surveys of parents, teachers, students

Documents Relative to Standard 3:

NOTE: This is an abbreviated list of documents taken from the indicators. The absence of documents marked by an asterisk may delay the accreditation process.

- **Curriculum guides/curriculum map**
- **List of course offerings**
- **Academic profile**
- **School calendar**
- **Daily/weekly schedules**
- **Description of challenged materials process**

Other documents listed with the indicators for Standard 3:

- Curriculum scope and sequence
- Lesson plans
- Syllabi
- Minutes of grade level, department, division meetings
- Professional development opportunities
- List of co-curricular offerings
- College acceptances
- Instructional and curriculum meeting minutes/notes
- In-service agendas
- Character or leadership programs
- Team building activities among faculty and/or students
- Advisory meetings
- Student council agendas/minutes
- Technology plan
- Media/resources plan
- Operating budget related to this indicator - technology
- Technology acceptable use policy
- Standardized tests or other regular assessments
- Progress reports
- "Mission Skills Assessment" rubrics
- Report cards, portfolio assessments
- Analysis of student assessments through curriculum and instructional meeting minutes/notes
- Adjustments in placement, teacher preparation, curriculum are documented in the above meeting minutes/notes
- Surveys of parents, teachers, students

STANDARD 4: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS

The school develops and maintains effective communication and relationships to further its mission.

An SAIS accredited school communicates clearly and accurately with its stakeholders and encourages collaboration to further its mission.

STANDARD 4 – INDICATORS:

4.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning.

The school must demonstrate involvement with the community through discussions, presentations, communications, and outreach activities with internal and external stakeholders such as students, parents, faculty, key civic groups and leaders.

Evidence may include:

- News stories
- Exit interviews
- Coffee talks
- Focus groups

4.2 Assures that communications among and between school staff, stakeholders, and alumni are clear and effective.

Clear and consistent communication is key to an effective mission driven school and should exist in formats and methods that address the needs of those with whom communication is taking place.

Evidence may include:

- Surveys
- Newsletters
- Parent night schedules
- Emails
- Social media
- Magazine
- Communications schedules and plans

4.3 Uses the knowledge and skills of parents to enhance the work of the school.

Minutes from periodic parent meetings along with an organized volunteer program would be good indicators of compliance. There must be evidence that parent input is received, reviewed, and, where applicable, implemented – while not overstepping the operational authority and responsibility of the school.

Evidence may include:

- Minutes from parent meetings
- Volunteer guidelines and/or handbook
- Minutes from administrative meetings where parent input is discussed
- Focus groups
- Surveys

4.4 Assures that there is ongoing evidence of communication with appropriate agencies, such as public health, mental health, physicians, and other professionals.

The school should be able to demonstrate that it has established relationships with appropriate external community resources so that both routine and emergency services in a wide variety of fields are readily available (see Indicator 5.11).

Evidence may include:

- Communication to and from community resources such as police, fire department, city/urban planning offices, child protective services, state and local emergency management, mental health resources, and other agencies and service providers as appropriate
- Statements in handbooks indicating relationships with community resources
Note that confidential examples of referrals need NOT be shared

4.5 Assures that the school’s advertising and promotional materials reflect accurate information about the school’s programs and accomplishments.

Admissions materials, viewbooks, web and other internal and external marketing materials should align with physical and testimonial evidence and should be accurate and true representations of the school. Claims made regarding school accomplishments should be able to be documented.

Evidence may include:

- Marketing materials that describe the school
- Website content
- Publications

4.6 Gathers information about graduates and other former students, using the resulting data to inform the school.

Retention and attrition studies of students, results of alumni surveys, exit interviews with families that leave prior to graduation, and written summaries of interviews with parents provide evidence. Surveys of faculty/staff and students can also provide important data to help improve the school.

Evidence may include:

- Survey data and analysis
- Examples of database information
- Examples of how information gathered is used for school improvement and mission fulfillment

Documents Relative to Standard 4:

NOTE: This is an abbreviated list of documents taken from the indicators. The absence of documents marked by an asterisk may delay the accreditation process.

****Communication to and from community resources such as police, fire department, city/urban planning offices, child protective services, state and local emergency management, mental health resources, and other agencies and service providers as appropriate****

****Relevant examples of communication with various stakeholders****

Other documents listed with the indicators for Standard 4:

- Volunteer guidelines and/or handbook
- News stories
- Exit interviews
- Coffee talks
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Newsletters
- Parent night schedules
- Emails
- Social media
- Magazine
- Communications schedules and plans
- Minutes from parent meetings
- Minutes from administrative meetings where parent input is discussed
- Statements in handbooks indicating relationships with community resources
- Note that confidential examples of medical or other referrals need NOT be shared
- Website content
- Publications
- Survey data and analysis
- Examples of database information
- Examples of how information gathered is used for school improvement and mission fulfillment

STANDARD 5: RESOURCES & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The school has the resources, services, and policies necessary to support its mission.

An SAIS accredited school has sufficient human and material resources, employs a qualified and competent staff, and provides ongoing professional development. The school has well-defined and communicated policies and procedures to promote a safe, healthy, and orderly environment.

STANDARD 5 – INDICATORS:

5.1 Provides written policies covering recruitment, employment, assignment, evaluation, and termination of service to all school personnel.

Handbooks and other materials should describe all phases of faculty and staff members' association with the school. Note that the concepts in Indicator 5.1 are expanded upon in Indicators 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5. Regular reviews of personnel practices will help keep the school up to date on the most recent laws and requirements. HR policies and procedures should also include consideration of volunteers: in the school, as chaperones, on the fields, as host or homestay families, etc.

Evidence may include:

- Employee and volunteer handbooks
- Employment and volunteer agreements
- Employee and volunteer applications
- Description of hiring process including screening and background check procedures for employees and volunteers
- Description of professional development
- Employee and volunteer evaluation process
- Termination policy

5.2 Assures that administrative, instructional and support staff are qualified and competent to perform the duties assigned to them in the school in order to meet the needs of the total school program and the students enrolled.

The focus here is on three characteristics of excellence at independent schools – qualifications of employees, competence of employees, and meeting the needs of students. Clear position descriptions are the best evidence, coupled with specific qualifications of the individual regarding their suitability for the work assigned. Apart from credentialing, certification, or alternative preparation and subject matter accumulation, heads or division leaders must be able to explain reasons for hiring.

Evidence may include:

- Description of expected qualification of employees
- Job postings and job/position descriptions
- Faculty characteristics and demographics

5.3 Assures that there is an effective orientation program for faculty and staff new to the school.

Program description with agendas and minutes provide a good explanation. Consider how the school assesses the effectiveness of the orientation program and its continuation throughout employee's period of being "new."

Evidence may include:

- Mentoring program
- Faculty orientation schedule
- Minutes of meetings demonstrating support for employees new to the school

5.4 Assures that all staff members participate in a continuous program of professional development.

All staff, including but not limited to faculty, administrators, administrative, custodial staff, boarding and or homestay families are part of this requirement. While the specifics of the program are up to the school and may differ based on the employee's role at the school, there must be evidence that a formal method is in place which may include: how individuals are made aware of this requirement; how fulfillment of this requirement is recorded; descriptions of what professional opportunities are made available and how they are aligned with the strategic vision of the school; and how professional development is funded.

Evidence may include:

- Employee handbook
- Employment agreement
- Minutes from faculty meetings where opportunities are discussed - could include any number of growth opportunities such as pedagogical approaches, content area information, health and wellness training, mandatory reporting procedures and student safety, etc.
- Copies of flyers, etc. notifying staff of opportunities
- Reports given by employees regarding professional learning
- Descriptions of PLC or Critical Friends groups
- Analysis of staff participation in professional learning for a defined period of time
- Description of the connections between strategic initiatives, assessment of employee needs, and allocations of time and resources dedicated to professional learning

5.5 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.

Programs of evaluation of performance can take many forms and should be developed to support the growth and development of employees within the mission context of the school. There is no one correct way to do this. A thorough written description of the evaluation system provides good evidence. Consider how the school assesses the effectiveness of the evaluation program.

Evidence may include:

- Employee handbook
- Evaluation procedures
- Peer class observation plans
- Descriptions of learning community

5.6 Provides well-defined and written student policies encompassing recruitment, admissions, administration of financial aid, conduct, discipline, and separation.

Student materials should describe all phases of student's association with the school. Consistency and compliance with state law are necessary. Note that the concepts in Indicator 5.6 are expanded upon in Indicators 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9.

Evidence may include:

- Admissions materials
- Student and parent handbooks
- Financial aid materials

5.7 Assures that there are well-defined, published admissions and financial aid/scholarship processes including criteria upon which decisions are made, and that professional ethics are strictly observed in the process.

Review of documentation along with interviews with parents will support this indicator.

Evidence may include:

- Admissions materials
- Student and parent handbooks
- Financial aid materials
- Standards of ethical admissions practices

5.8 Accepts students for whom there is a reasonable expectation of success from the program.

Evidence of compliance should demonstrate admissions decisions based on a student's compatibility with the school's mission, program, and academic guidelines.

Evidence may include:

- Analysis of success of students
- Descriptions of the successful candidate as aligned with mission and academic goals of the school

5.9 Assures that guidelines for student conduct, attendance, and dress, and discipline are written and communicated to all students, parents, and members of staff.

Written notices are key indicators of compliance. As an example: where uniforms are required, the team should easily be able to compare the written dress code with the actual implementation of it by the student body.

Evidence may include:

- Student handbooks
- Written notices of guidelines
- Evidence of pertinent assemblies, grade meetings, advisory groups, student community building activities, etc.

5.10 Provides counseling services that meet the needs of students.

Counseling services may include college counseling, emotional counseling, learning differences, spiritual counseling, etc. However provided, these must show alignment with mission and needs of students. Faculty should be aware of procedures in place and of their role in the process.

Evidence may include:

- Interviews with parents and students
- Descriptions of services in Parent and Student Handbooks

5.11 Assures that students whose needs cannot be met in school are referred to appropriate agencies or resources for assistance.

Having existing relationships with outside agencies and resource providers (see Indicator 4.4) allows a school to continue to assist students whose needs the school cannot meet fully.

Evidence may include:

- Written procedures in faculty handbooks
- Evidence of faculty orientation
- Written agreements with outside providers

5.12 The school maintains secure, accurate, and complete records of operations, finances, personnel and students in accordance with state and federal regulations including both paper and electronic records. The school has a plan to ensure appropriate access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event of a school closure.

SAIS schools are required to implement and maintain a records retention system that meets applicable governmental requirements for all operating, financial, personnel, and student records. The records retention system applies to paper and electronic records, includes appropriate back-up systems, and details consistent processes for records destruction. In states where no guidance is provided by governmental agencies, SAIS schools should consult with the SAIS office to ensure appropriate access and maintenance of all relevant records in the event of school closure.

Evidence may include:

- Descriptions of data security and access
- Document retention policies
- Plan for permanent access to documents (student records, employee records, etc.)

5.13 Has a written crisis management plan.

A written plan that is understood and practiced by faculty, staff, and students and that is regularly reviewed and evaluated is the best evidence.

Evidence may include:

- Evidence of faculty training as required for CPR, first aid, child protective services issues and reporting, etc.
- Schedule of drills and analysis of efficiency/adequacy
- School crisis plans (facilities, communications, transportation, health, continuity, etc.)

5.14 Provides documentation of ongoing health and safety inspections and procedures.

This can be satisfied with certificates of inspection from agencies that are charged with inspecting and certifying the campus on safety matters.

Schools offering extended day programs and/or serving children younger than (senior) kindergarten shall provide evidence that they know and meet applicable state statutes and requirements related to pre-k programs. Typically, a state agency prescribes regulations for these programs and schools may or may not qualify for exemptions. To be considered for SAIS accreditation, these programs must be part of the overall school program and included in the school's standards compliance and self-study and must be operating in full compliance with the state agency and/or must demonstrate exemption from regulation.

Evidence may include:

- Certificates from health department, fire department, elevator, inspections, etc.
- License or exemptions from appropriate state agencies as required

Documents Relative to Standard 5:

NOTE: This is an abbreviated list of documents taken from the indicators. The absence of documents marked by an asterisk may delay the accreditation process.

Personnel documents

- **Employee handbooks**
- **Employment agreements**
- **Employee applications**
- **Description of hiring process including screening and background check procedures (both initial and periodic) for employees**
- **Description of professional development**
- **Employee evaluation process**
- **Termination policy**
- **Description of expected qualification of employees**
- **Job postings and job/position descriptions**
- **Faculty characteristics and demographics**
- **Faculty orientation schedule and topics addressed**
- **Description of the connections between strategic initiatives, assessment of employee needs, and allocations of time and resources dedicated to professional learning**

Student Documents

- **Admissions materials**
- **Student and parent handbooks**
- **Boarding or homestay program handbook**
- **Financial aid materials**
- **Standards of ethical admissions practices**

Documents Relative to Standard 5, continued:

Health, Safety, Security (see Standard 2)

- **Evidence of faculty training as required for CPR, first aid, child protective services issues and reporting, etc.**
- **Schedule of drills and analysis of efficiency/adequacy**
- **School crisis plans (facilities, communications, media, transportation, health, continuity, etc.)**
- **Certificates from health department, fire department, elevator inspections, etc.**
- **Internal inspection and audit procedures and documentation**
- **License or exemptions from appropriate state agencies as required**
- **Descriptions of data security and access**
- **Document retention policies**
- **Plan for permanent access to documents (student records, employee records, etc.)**
- **Defined protocol for adult and student interactions**

Other documents listed with the indicators for Standard 5:

- Volunteer handbooks
- Volunteer agreements
- Volunteer applications
- Description of screening and background check procedures (both initial and periodic) for volunteers
- Description of professional development
- Volunteer evaluation process
- Mentoring program
- Minutes of meetings demonstrating support for employees new to the school
- Minutes from faculty meetings where professional growth opportunities are discussed - could include any number of growth opportunities such as pedagogical approaches, content area information, health and wellness training, mandatory reporting procedures and student safety, etc.
- Copies of flyers, etc. notifying staff of opportunities
- Reports given by employees regarding professional learning
- Descriptions of PLC or Critical Friends groups
- Analysis of staff participation in professional learning for a defined period of time
- Analysis of success of students
- Descriptions of the successful candidate as aligned with mission and academic goals of the school
- Written notices of guidelines
- Evidence of pertinent assemblies, grade meetings, advisory groups, student community building activities, etc.
- Descriptions of counseling services in parent and student Handbooks
- Written procedures of referrals in faculty handbooks
- Evidence of faculty orientation to referrals
- Written agreements with outside providers for student referrals