

NJAIS

New Jersey Association of Independent Schools

# NJAIS Accreditation Team Guide



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# Section I: Introduction

## NJAIS MISSION

The New Jersey Association of Independent Schools (NJ AIS) is a non-profit, voluntary membership association whose mission is to foster the educational, ethical, and professional excellence of its member schools, while safeguarding their independence.

NJAIS fulfills its mission by:

- administering a rigorous, standards-based accreditation program that supports continuous school improvement.
- providing a broad spectrum of professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, and trustees.
- advocating for member schools at the local, state, and federal levels.
- promoting best practices and the value of education in independent schools.

## INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION FROM THE NJAIS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND DIRECTOR OF ACCREDITATION

Dear Accreditation Team Member,

Thank you for undertaking this important role for NJAIS. Through the accreditation process, schools have time for critical self-reflection and improvement, and through evaluation, quality assurance is established.

Schools are reminded that the collaborative work that they have done in preparing the Self-Study is the most important part of the accreditation process. However, your role as a Visiting Team Member is vital to the success of this process. The conduct and tone of the Visiting Team members allows the school to feel that it is being reviewed fairly and fully, and that the months of meetings to prepare the report were well spent.

The task you are undertaking is an enormously important one—to the school that you are visiting, to the schools you represent as an official evaluator, for NJAIS, and to the strong tradition of independent education in New Jersey. It is quite common for Accreditation Chairs and Visiting Team members to remark that serving on a Visiting Team is an opportunity for tremendous professional growth.

In preparing this manual, we hope that we are providing you with information that will be helpful as you prepare for the visit.

Please be sure to ask your Accreditation Chair for help and guidance. We also stand ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

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## NJAIS ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Accreditation is central to the mission of NJAIS. NJAIS has been accrediting member schools since 1995, either as the sole accrediting agency, or cooperatively with the American Montessori Society (AMS), the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), or the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CESS).

Similar to its member schools, NJAIS itself participates in a rigorous and impartial review of its accreditation program and demonstrates adherence to the *Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices* set forth by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA, formerly known as the NAIS Commission on Accreditation). In the fall of 2001, following the creation and adoption of its *Standards and Self-Study* by the Association's Board of Trustees, the NJAIS accreditation program was granted recognition by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). In 2013, NJAIS was granted certification by an international review panel from the NAIS Commission on Accreditation. NJAIS is a member in good standing of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA). The NJAIS accreditation program is reviewed every 10 years by members of the Council.

### *Benefits of NJAIS Accreditation*

The thorough and rigorous process of accreditation administered by NJAIS is important to independent schools for many reasons.

- Undergoing a thorough self-study process, receiving feedback through peer review, and developing a multi-year plan for institutional improvement supports each school in more fully realizing its mission.
- An effective process of evaluation and accreditation brings credibility to NJAIS and inspires public confidence in each of its member schools.
- The absence of an effective and professional system of peer review could well lead to increased oversight on the part of state and/or federal governmental agencies, yielding an accreditation process that would likely be more cumbersome and less responsive to the unique character of independent schools.

Other benefits of NJAIS accreditation include:

- promoting a reflective and collaborative continuous school improvement process;
- providing school leaders, including boards of trustees, with independent, non-governmental validation and affirmation of current programs and services, along with well-considered recommendations for future improvements;
- demonstrating the school's willingness to be held professionally accountable;
- enhancing student learning and growth by examining the educational program;
- granting seasoned professional educators valuable exposure to best practices in other schools through their participation on peer review visiting teams;

- presenting a school’s board of trustees an independent, non-governmental validation that the school under its care is effectively delivering a quality educational experience to its students;
- assuring current school parents and the broader public, including prospective families, that the school is focused on providing a safe and enriching educational learning environment while maintaining efficient and effective operations;
- providing a credential that is often required in corporate and foundation fundraising;
- facilitating school and college admissions, transfers, and admission of international students;
- positioning school leaders for strategic planning and visioning; and
- enhancing staff collegiality and broader school understanding through the self-study process.

### *The Ten-Year Cycle*

The NJAIS accreditation process is cyclical in nature.

**The Self-Study Report:** Every 10 years, following defined procedures, a school undertakes a comprehensive self-evaluation that results in a Self-Study Report. This is the foundation of the accreditation process and provides the focus for the subsequent visit of a team of seasoned educators.

This *NJ AIS Guide for Accreditation* integrates mandated standards into a self-study protocol that requires a school to both describe how the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation are met and to generate plans for school improvement.

**The Visit:** A Visiting Team, comprised of peers from other independent schools, visits the school, views it through the lens of its mission statement and the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation, and validates the school’s Self-Study Report. Following this visit, the Visiting Team provides the school and the NJAIS Accreditation Committee with a draft report that includes the team’s observations, commendations, and recommendations.

**Follow-Up:** Between one and three months after the Decennial Visit, the school receives from NJAIS a final comprehensive Decennial Report and learns of its accreditation status. This Decennial Report lays the foundation for future school improvement and strategic planning/thinking/visioning.

**Action Plan:** Within one year of the receipt of the Decennial Report, the school must submit to NJAIS an Action Plan. The school chooses three to five overarching goals or initiatives on which it intends to focus in the coming years. This Action Plan must also include responses to all of the recommendations in the Decennial Report.

**Five-Year Visit:** Five years after the initial visit, a team of two or three members - from the original Visiting Team, if possible - visit the school. In advance of this visit, the school writes a Five-Year Report, including a state-of-the-school update, a description of progress on recommendations from the Decennial Report, and a response to the *current* NJAIS Standards for Accreditation. Accreditation status is evaluated again at this five-year juncture.

**Significant Change Visits:** During the time that a school is accredited by NJAIS it may undergo significant changes. The NJAIS accreditation process requires that a visit to the campus of the school take place as soon as possible - or within six months at most - following the change(s). Accreditation status is evaluated again after a Significant Change Visit.

### *The NJAIS Standards for Accreditation*

Every 10 years, NJAIS conducts an extensive on-site review of each member school to confirm its continuing compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and other requirements for membership in the Association. The school's Self-Study Report is the centerpiece of the decennial review. The school organizes an all-inclusive assessment of school operations in an endeavor, guided by the Standards for Accreditation, to chart a course for improvement in every area of school life. The Self-Study Report also assesses the school's compliance with each standard and identifies any shortcomings requiring attention.

The NJAIS Standards for Accreditation are organized under the following major sections and sub-sections:

- I. Mission/Philosophy
  - A. Mission/Philosophy
  - B. School Climate and Culture
  - C. Community Relations
  - D. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
  - E. Global Awareness
  - F. Environmental Stewardship
  
- II. Institutional Leadership
  - A. Governance
  - B. Administration
  - C. Human Resources
  
- III. Educational Program
  - A. Program Overview
  - B. Program Analysis
  - C. Teaching and Learning
    - 1. Curriculum and Instruction
    - 2. Remote Learning
    - 3. Support Services: Learning Support, Counseling, Advising, Health, and Wellness

4. Discipline
5. Secondary School and College Counseling
6. Co-curricular Activities and Athletics

IV. Technology

V. Advancement

- A. Enrollment Management: Admissions, Retention, and Financial Aid
- B. Marketing and Communications
- C. Development/Fundraising

VI. Finance and Operations

- A. School Finance and Financial Management
- B. Facilities
- C. Safety
- D. Record-Keeping

VII. Residential Schools/Homestay Programs (if applicable)

VIII. Schools Affiliated with Religious Organizations/Faith-Based Institutions (if applicable)



## **ROLES IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

### **The Visiting Team's Role**

Visiting Team members are drawn from independent schools both within and outside of NJ and are carefully selected to match the needs of NJAIS and the school being visited. The work of the team is intensive and focused throughout the accreditation visit.

The job of the Visiting Team is to make sure that the school is, in fact, doing what it says it is doing in its Self-Study, to evaluate the programs of the school in reference to its Mission/Philosophy Statement, and to evaluate the school according to the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation. It is not the job of the Visiting Team to evaluate teachers or other personnel, nor to serve as consultants. Throughout the Visit, Visiting Team members will make constant reference back to these primary documents:

- The school's Mission/Philosophy Statement
- The school's Self-Study
- The NJAIS Standards of Accreditation

These documents, combined with first-hand observations of the school, are major points of reference for this evaluation.

### **The School**

The school community invests 12-18 months on the process of self-evaluation. They then host a group of independent school educators identified by NJAIS and invite them to make assessments about the school and the work that has been done. They rely on the Visiting Team to be fair, clear, and helpful.

### **NJAIS Staff**

The NJAIS Executive Director and Director of Accreditation work on behalf of the Accreditation Committee to appoint Visiting Team Chairs and members, and schedule and coordinate all aspects of the review process from start to finish. Services include guiding the school through its Self-Study process, on-site conferences, and publication of materials to support the schools. The NJAIS staff also supports the Visiting Team through its preparation, assignment of responsibilities, and review of the school. The *NJAIS Accreditation Team Member Guide* and workshop training sessions are all meant to help make the process cohesive for both the school and the Visiting Team.

## **Visiting Team Chair and Vice-Chair**

NJAIS selects school leaders to serve as Accreditation Chairs and Vice Chairs. Their years of experience working in schools naturally prepare them for the complex roles they will serve as team leaders. Skills related to consensus building, diplomacy, prioritizing, observing, humor, and the ability to guide reflection, decision-making, and the process of bringing closure to the experience all serve an Accreditation Chair and/or Vice-Chair well. The Accreditation Chair and Vice-Chair serve as the filter through which information is sent both from the school to the Visiting Team and from the Visiting Team to the school. Though sometimes difficult, Accreditation Chairs and Vice-Chairs must leave thoughts of their own schools behind and focus only on the school being evaluated. This might be the Accreditation Chair's and Vice-Chair's most difficult task!

## **NJAIS Accreditation Committee**

The Accreditation Committee, comprised of NJAIS Heads of School and Finance Officers, relies on the Visiting Team to provide clear, complete, and accurate information, as well as appropriate recommendations to assist the school in its improvement efforts. The Committee will evaluate this information and make recommendations to the NJAIS Board of Trustees concerning accreditation status.

## **NJAIS Board of Trustees**

The NJAIS Board of Trustees takes action on the recommendations of the NJAIS Accreditation Committee. The NJAIS Executive Director communicates that action to the school. The decision is also communicated to the Chair of the Visiting Team, who then shares the action with the Visiting Team so that there is closure to the process.

## Section II: Pre-Visit Preparations

### PRE-VISIT PREPARATION FOR TEAM MEMBERS

\_\_\_ NJAIS Director of Accreditation sends all Visiting Team members the *NJAIS Accreditation Team Member Guide*, a Confidentiality/Conflict of Interest Statement for signature, and an information sheet. Read the *NJAIS Accreditation Team Member Guide* and bring to the visit.

\_\_\_ Return the Confidentiality/Conflict of Interest Statement to Lisa Campisi, NJAIS Director of Accreditation, at [lcampisi@njais.org](mailto:lcampisi@njais.org).

\_\_\_ Chair sends a letter or email to introduce him or herself to Visiting Team members. A conference call for introductions can also be used.

\_\_\_ Chair sends interest survey with areas of expertise to team members. Complete and return to team Chair.

\_\_\_ Chair sends an email with the preliminary schedule and an interest survey to team members. The Chair may recommend specific preparation to the team members such as pre-writing. Emphasis is placed on a review of the NJAIS Standards of Accreditation. Team members will be asked about food allergies or dietary restrictions.

\_\_\_ School sends Visiting Team members the Self-Study, other materials, and hotel information.

\_\_\_ Visiting Team members participate in NJAIS training session conducted via Zoom Video Conference. This training is organized and scheduled by the NJAIS Director of Accreditation.

\_\_\_ Be sure you have read the school's Self-Study Report completely prior to the visit. Give particular care to the sections you will cover in the Visiting Team report. Make notes and prepare questions in advance.

\_\_\_ Review the school's website and any other materials sent.

## INFORMATION, EXPECTATIONS, AND PROCEDURE

Please check into the hotel on the first day of the accreditation visit in the afternoon. The Visiting Team will gather shortly after the recommended check-in time for a training session. After that session, the Team will go to the school for a tour and brief welcoming reception. The Team will return to the hotel for dinner and an organizational meeting on the first evening that will enable all to “hit the ground running.”

Included in this *Guide* is a copy of the Visiting Team member interest survey that lists the various areas and related standards to be covered in the evaluation. Team members will select choices that will help the Chair to allocate the observation and writing assignments. Please know that the Chair will try to honor your requests and preferences; however, compromises may have to be made to assure comprehensive coverage of the different areas.

Please alert the Chair if you have any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or need special accommodations.

As representatives of NJAIS, your dress during this accreditation visit must be professional. In addition, please arrange to bring a laptop for use during the visit. (If you do not have access to one, let the Chair know.)

Finally, keep track of and retain receipts for all of your travel expenses. A reimbursement form will be submitted during the visit.

## Visiting Team Member Interest Survey

Please mark in each section your top four choices (“1” = Highest to “4” = Lower Interest) and return via email to the Visiting Team Chair.

### General Areas

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mission/Philosophy
- \_\_\_\_\_ School Climate and Culture
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
- \_\_\_\_\_ Global Awareness
- \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Stewardship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Governance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Administration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Human Resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Program
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remote Instruction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support Services: Learning Support, Counseling, Advising, Health, and Wellness
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discipline
- \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School and College and Career Advising
- \_\_\_\_\_ Co-curricular Activities and Athletics
- \_\_\_\_\_ Technology
- \_\_\_\_\_ Enrollment Management: Admissions, Retention, and Financial Aid
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marketing and Communications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Development/Fundraising
- \_\_\_\_\_ School Finance and Financial Management
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Safety
- \_\_\_\_\_ Record-Keeping

### Instructional Areas (Others as Needed)

- \_\_\_\_\_ English/Language Arts
- \_\_\_\_\_ History/Social Studies
- \_\_\_\_\_ World Languages    Please list your proficiencies: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mathematics

- \_\_\_\_\_ Science
- \_\_\_\_\_ Performing Arts: Dance, Drama, Music
- \_\_\_\_\_ Visual Arts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Religious Education (if applicable)

**Additional experience or expertise (examples: special education, Montessori, Waldorf, etc.)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **SUB-COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

The Chair makes sub-committee assignments based on Visiting Team member interest surveys and expertise, the size of the Visiting Team, and the needs of the school. Visiting Team members will work together to create the sub-committee reports that correlate with the standards and school's Self-Study. Each academic area needs to have a sub-committee to cover it and write a report. Schools that have a religious affiliation or have a boarding division will use Appendix A and/or B, and reports must be written about these areas, too.

The Chair may assign Visiting Team members to cover those areas in whatever configuration he or she thinks will be best. The Chair should keep in mind that everything mentioned in the report needs to have been corroborated by at least two members of the Visiting Team. Every attempt should be made to conduct formal meetings with at least two team members in attendance.

One method of organizing the coverage for each sub-committee is to assign two people to investigate and be responsible for each area with one person having the primary responsibility for writing that section. This person is designated as the Subcommittee Leader. This way everyone has at least one area to write about and other areas to support. This does not mean that the other Visiting Team members do not help in all areas; they do.

Please see the sub-committee list on the next page.

	Subcommittee Leader	Subcommittee Member	Subcommittee Member	Date/Time Report Due
Mission/Philosophy				
School Climate and Culture				
Community Relations				
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion				
Global Awareness				
Environmental Awareness				
Governance				
Administration				
Human Resources				
English/Language Arts				
History/Social Studies				
World Languages				
Mathematics				
Science				
Performing Arts: Dance, Drama, Music				
Visual Arts				
Physical Education				
Religious Education (if applicable)				
Support Services: Learning Support, Counseling, Advising, Health, and Wellness				
Discipline				

Secondary School and College Counseling				
(Continued)	Subcommittee Leader	Subcommittee Member	Subcommittee Member	Date/Time Report Due
Co-curricular Activities and Athletics				
Technology				
Enrollment Management: Admissions, Retention, and Financial Aid				
Marketing and Communications				
Development / Fundraising				
School Finance and Financial Management				
Facilities				
Safety				
Record-Keeping				
Residential Program/Schools with Homestay Students (if applicable)				
Schools Affiliated with Religious Organizations/Faith-Based Programs				



## Section III: The Visit

### OPENING VISITING TEAM MEETING

On-site training and orientation of the Visiting Team:

1. Overview of process by the Team Chair (*PowerPoint* presentation may be used).
2. The Visiting Team is to determine if the school is doing what it says it is doing, realizing its Mission, and if it is meeting the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation. The Chair and Visiting Team will read and review the school's Mission/Philosophy together during the opening meeting. The Mission will be referenced throughout the visit.
3. Confidentiality is expected both while at the school and after the visit concludes.
4. Visiting Team members are to ask questions, but not to use "loaded" questions or questions phrased in a negative form.
5. Each faculty member should be visited at least once for about 10 minutes by two different team members. During classroom visits, please avoid taking notes. Items needed to be noted should be written outside the classroom. The Chair will post a list of faculty members in the team room and have team members initial upon visiting respective classrooms.
6. Visiting Team members should turn off cell phones and not make or receive calls during classroom visits, Visiting Team deliberations, or other school events (such as the reception).
7. Requests for additional information from the school should be directed through the Chair or Vice-Chair.
8. Review the format to be used in constructing the sub-committee reports (see sample in Appendix).
9. Visiting Team members should consult the school's Statement of Mission/Philosophy frequently and note also that the outcomes are to be measured against the respective Standards for Accreditation.
10. Sub-committee members should check several commendations and recommendations as the most important, and identify themes that might be included in the Chair's Concluding Exit Remarks.

11. Sub-committee reports should be filed with the Chair via Google Doc, email or on a thumb drive, as instructed by the Chair.
12. The Visiting Team will convene during and after dinner each evening; however, there will be no excessive late night meetings.
13. Expenses for travel, food, and lodging are paid by the school. Any personal charges to the room bill (such as telephone calls) are to be paid by the individual. Return expense vouchers to your chair for presentation to the school for reimbursement before the Visiting Team members depart after the Exit Remarks on the third full day of the visit.
14. Leave no papers or computer files behind in the Visiting Team room. Do not remove any materials provided by the school (yearbooks, catalogues, handbooks, etc.).

## RECEPTION

At the opening reception, the Chair will present brief opening remarks. Visiting Team members will introduce themselves; you should state your name, school name, and title at your current school.

## REVIEWING ON-SITE DOCUMENTS

The Team Chair will provide Visiting Team members with the list of on-site documents housed in the Visiting Team Room for their review.

## VISITING SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Visiting Team members are provided with a list of faculty, staff, and administration – this may be posted on paper or digitally. Team members should initial each person with whom they have met. Midway through the visit, assess who still needs to be interviewed. By the time the Visiting Team leaves, everyone in the school community should feel valued and heard.

## WRITING AND EDITING SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Visiting Team members will be instructed that the Visiting Team report is comprised of individual sub-committee reports. A sample sub-committee report is found in the Appendix of this *Guide*; NJAIS can also provide additional samples to the Team as needed. Each report consists of a narrative section describing the criteria area and listing anything not in agreement with the Self-Study or not consistent with the school's mission and philosophy. This is followed by a list of commendations and recommendations. To facilitate this part of the report and insure consistency:

- Commendations are phrased as, “**The school is commended for ...**”
- Recommendations are phrased as, “**The Visiting Team recommends that the school ...**”

Except under unusual circumstances, the number of commendations and recommendations in the sub-committee's report should be approximately equal in number. There are usually three-five (3-5) commendations recommendations in sub-committee reports, though this may change given the circumstances at the school being visited.

Projection may be utilized in sharing sub-committee reports in order to facilitate this process and to accommodate different learning styles of the Visiting Team.

Be sure to refer to the school's Self-Study Report when you are writing a section so that all recommendations they make for themselves are also covered in the Visiting Team's Report.

## STANDARDS VOTING RECORD

A copy of the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation is included in the *Accreditation Team Member Guide*. A printed copy should be made available to each team member when voting on standards.

**\*\*Note: The school must meet all standards to be granted accreditation. \*\***

## EXIT REMARKS

At the initial reception, the chair will be present an overview of the accreditation process and will ask Visiting Team members to introduce themselves.

The Chair will prepare and deliver the Concluding Exit Remarks on the afternoon of the final day to the school community. There will be no opportunity for questions. It is highly recommended that members of the Visiting Team attend this meeting. The Chair and all Visiting Team members should leave promptly at the conclusion of the Exit Remarks.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR THE DECENNIAL VISIT

The schedule for the Decennial Visit is created by the school in coordination with the Chair of the Visiting Team. Please note that the accreditation team visit is scheduled from Sunday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon or Tuesday afternoon to Friday afternoon. These dates are selected based on both the optimum time for the school to host the team and the Chair's availability. Prior to the visit, faculty must be informed that there should be no tests, full-period movies, or field trips scheduled when the team is on campus. A "normal" school-day schedule should be in effect, and faculty, administrators, and staff should be on campus and available for the duration of the visit.

### Sunday or Tuesday (Day #1)

Noon Chair arrives at hotel. Confirm lodging and meal/snack arrangements for the Visiting Team.

1:00 p.m.	Visiting Team members arrive at the hotel and check-in
1:30 p.m.	Visiting Team assembles at the hotel for orientation session
3:00 p.m.	Head of School arrives to welcome the Visiting Team
4:00 p.m.	Visiting Team tours the school (often with student tour guides)
5:00 p.m.	Reception at the school, including introductions
6:30 p.m.	Dinner for the Visiting Team at the hotel, including further organizational work

### Day #2

8:00 a.m.	Visiting Team convenes and makes classroom visits throughout the day
Morning	Observe drop-off
TBD	Observe a fire drill. (The Chair, not the school, schedules this, and it should be a surprise for the school.)
9:00 a.m.	Tour of facilities for Visiting Team's Finance and Operations subcommittee
9:30 a.m.	Mission and Institutional Leadership subcommittees meet with a group of trustees
10:15 a.m.	Finance and Operations subcommittee meets with the Business Manager
10:30 a.m.	Mission subcommittee meets with Environmental and Global personnel, and, if appropriate, faculty
11:30 a.m.	Educational Program subcommittee meets with Librarian/Media Specialist/Technology Personnel
	Human Resources, Finance and Operations subcommittees meet with Head and assistants
12:30 p.m.	Lunch (This may be with some Visiting Team members with students and faculty in the cafeteria, if there is one, or available in the Visiting Team room.)

1:15 p.m. Educational Program subcommittee meets with the Athletic Director and PE staff  
Educational Program subcommittee meets with Visual and Performing Arts faculty and staff

2:00 p.m. Institutional Advancement and School Climate and Culture subcommittees meet with selected parents

Afternoon Observe dismissal

3:00 p.m. Institutional Leadership subcommittee meets with senior administration

3:45 – 5:00 p.m. Visiting Team works on subcommittee reports

5:00 - p.m. Pause for reflections and observations about the school and visit in general

5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Dinner (either at school, restaurant, or hotel)

6:45 – 8:45 p.m. Visiting Team continues to work on reports. Share final reports of Finance and Operations and Institutional Leadership subcommittees. Begin work on NJAIS Standards and vote on any that are obviously “Standard Met.” Review reports of any academic areas that are ready.

### Day #3

8:00 a.m. Visiting Team convenes and continues to make classroom visits throughout the day

9:00 a.m. Institutional Advancement subcommittee meets with Admissions, Financial Aid, Marketing, and Diversity

10:00 a.m. Institutional Advancement subcommittee meets with Development, Alumni, Communications staff

10:00 a.m. Educational Program subcommittee meets with Department/Division Heads/Deans  
School Culture and Climate subcommittee meets with a group of students/Student Council

11:00 a.m. Support Services subcommittee meets with Counseling staff and school nurse

12:00 p.m. Lunch

12:30 p.m. Review the list of faculty to see whom still needs a classroom visit

1:00 p.m. Educational Program subcommittee meets with secondary school and/or college counselor(s) and learning support staff

1:30 p.m. Residential Life subcommittee meets with residential faculty and staff  
Faith-based subcommittee meets with religious leaders

Late Afternoon Visiting Team continues work on academic subcommittee reports

Evening Dinner as per Chair’s preference  
Reports of Mission and Advancement committees. Finish academic subcommittee reports. Vote on any additional NJAIS Standards. Reflect on how things are going, the Team’s work and concerns, the progress on its report, and the general state of the school.

## Final Day

8:00 a.m.	Visiting Team convenes at school and conducts any remaining interviews and may continue to visit classes as needed.
8:15 a.m. – Noon	Finalize program subcommittee reports Final vote on all remaining NJAIS Standards – (Any “Standard Not Met” must have a clear explanation and recommendation in the report.) The team will vote on each standard; the NJAIS Accreditation Committee will make a recommendation to the NJAIS Board regarding accreditation. **Note: The school must meet all standards to be granted accreditation. ** Discuss major themes from the visit and start to determine and prioritize Major Commendations and Major Recommendations Visiting Team completes work on the draft of the Visiting Team Report Chair prepares Exit/Oral Remarks and shares with Visiting Team.
12:15 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Chair (and Vice-Chair, if there is one) meets with Head of School
2:00 p.m.	Visiting Team finalizes reports, fills out expense vouchers, shreds pages of the Self-Study Report that contain personal annotations, returns copies of the Self-Study Report to the Chair, deletes any accreditation information from computers, hard, and flash drives, and tidies up the Visiting Team room.
2:30 p.m.	Chair delivers Exit/Oral Remarks to school community. Members of the Visiting Team are to attend.
3:00 p.m.	Visiting Team Departs

## SUGGESTIONS FOR VISITING TEAM MEMBERS

The task of a Visiting Team member is twofold: to see if the Self-Study is in fact an accurate description of what is occurring at the school, and to see if the program is consistent with the school’s Mission and Philosophy. In order to do this effectively, one must put one’s own Mission and Philosophy aside and think only from the perspective of the school. This is not an easy task.

Before an evaluator arrives at the school he or she should have read the Self-Study carefully and should have compiled questions to be pursued. The process of evaluating a school is a sophisticated one. One must proceed from the hard, objective data at hand to some meaningful subjective assessments and conclusions.

- Prepare by reading the Self-Study and documents and target questions for sub-committee areas.

- Relax and enjoy the conversations. Convey interest in the person as a professional with valuable thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Set a positive tone.
- Taking notes is appropriate (except during classroom visits).
- Be more concerned with the whole of the school than with its various segments. Ultimately, you must relate each part back to the larger context. Your objective is to arrive at in-depth conclusions; don't be distracted by surface matters.
- Ask questions that offer open-ended opportunities to talk honestly about the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Avoid questions that presume a negative response or imply criticism.
- Be alert to those cues and clues that can open wider perspectives for you on the school and your assigned area. You are in quest of the major strengths and pertinent areas needing further development. As some tentative conclusions begin to form in your mind, search out the information that will shed more light on these.
- When a flat statement is made by a person from the school, ask him or her to provide an illustration or to cite the facts on which he or she has based this judgment.
- Listen carefully to what people tell you. Avoid offering your own point of view.
- Be realistic in both your evaluations and your suggestions. Some of the constraints under which a school is operating may not be able to be changed. If this is so, keep your evaluation and your suggestions within the context of those given conditions.
- Discuss the school and all of its aspects freely with your colleagues on the Visiting Team. Be open to other viewpoints. The findings of your teammates will reinforce and challenge your views at different points in your discussions. (Do not discuss your reactions with members of the school staff.) Maintain your confidentiality pledge.
- Any conclusions or observations that you want to put into the report must be corroborated by another committee member so always check out what you are seeing or hearing with other members of the Visiting Team.
- The final report is a Visiting Team report. This means that you are to bring back to the Visiting Team your own conclusions and impressions regarding your areas of assignment, but the final report, and all of its parts, is based on decisions made by the entire Visiting Team.



- The ultimate goal of accreditation is school improvement. Maintain a growth mindset.

## CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

You will develop your own questions based on your reading of the school's Self-Study, review of the documents, and Visiting Team discussions. We have included some questions to serve as samples.

### Examples of Questions:

<i>Good questions:</i>	<i>Not so good questions:</i>
What do you consider to be the most important part of the school's mission and how is it reflected in the daily life of the school?	How would you respond to the comment that the commitment to diversity in your mission statement is not reflected in the daily life of the school?
Tell me about your biggest success in (aspect of the curriculum).	Why are you teaching (some aspect of the curriculum) in such a way?
Describe what you would do when you have a classroom management problem.	Do you get much support from the administration in dealing with classroom management issues?
What are your great hopes for the future of the school?	What do you wish would change about the school?

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – STUDENTS

1. What do you like best about this school?
2. What are some things this school does really well?
3. Tell me about the relationships among teachers and students.
4. Do the teachers give you extra help when you need it?
5. How often do you have the chance to use the library?
6. Are there any activities to participate in outside of the classroom?
7. How do you feel about the sports program? The arts program?
8. Would you recommend this school to your friends in other schools?

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FACULTY

1. How were you involved in the Self-Study process?
2. What have been the personal and professional benefits resulting from your participation?
3. Is the school meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of its students?
4. Tell us about communication in the school.
5. Give an example of how you have been involved in the decision-making process at the school.
6. How are teachers involved in curriculum development?
7. How does the school support you professionally? Are leadership skills developed in faculty members?
8. Are parents appropriately involved in the life of the school? What are some examples?
9. Who are the heroes of this school?
10. Tell me about your biggest success in teaching (name aspect of the curriculum).

11. Describe what you do when you have a classroom management problem.
12. Is there anything that you would like us to reinforce that you have stated as a need?
13. What are your great hopes for the future of the school?
14. Is there something you wish we had asked?

#### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – PARENTS

1. What aspects of the school make you glad you selected this school for your child or children?
2. What is something this school does really well?
3. Are your children happy going to school here?
4. What is your understanding of the mission of the school? How widely understood do you think the mission is by families in the school?
5. Are the parents given an overview of school expectations?
6. What are some of the ways that you are involved in the school community? Tell us about the level of involvement of the parent body in general.
7. What is the school's relationship with parents?
8. Does the school communicate effectively with parents?
9. How does the school respond to expressed concerns? Tell us about any time you needed to be in contact with your child's teacher or division head.
10. How adequate is communication about student progress?
11. Please describe disciplinary procedures in the school.
12. Tell us about any programs or speakers that you've heard at the school.
13. Who are the heroes of this school?
14. What dreams do you have for the school?
15. What are some improvements needed in the school?
16. What else do you believe we should know about the school?

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – HEAD OF SCHOOL

1. How long have you been at this school?
2. What are your priorities as the administrator of the school?
3. Tell us about your administrative team.
4. Please tell us about your Board and the Board-Head relationship.
5. What is the process for textbook and material selection?
6. What is the philosophy of curriculum development?
7. Describe staff professional development activities. Do you encourage attendance at NJAIS workshops and conferences?
8. What is your role in preparing the budget?
9. What is the projected enrollment for the fall?
10. What is the recruitment process for the school? Faculty? Staff? Attention to diversity?
11. What is your role in public relations? Admissions? Development?
12. What kinds of fundraisers do you have and how are they run?
13. Explain the role of volunteers in the school.
14. What are your goals for the school? Dreams?
15. Is there anything else we should know that we haven't asked?
16. Is there anything that you would like us to reinforce in the report?

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – STEERING COMMITTEE

1. How were you selected for the Steering Committee?
2. How frequently did the committee meet?
3. When did the Self-Study formally begin?
4. What methods were used to inform the faculty and community of progress?
5. Was there consensus reached on each section?
6. How was faculty input gathered?
7. How was the philosophy/mission section of the Self-Study written?
8. What effect did the work on the Self-Study have on the faculty? Other constituents?
9. What are your hopes and dreams because of this evaluation?

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – BOARD of TRUSTEES

1. What role did you have with regard to the Self-Study?
2. Please characterize your Board.
3. Please describe the procedures for identifying, electing, and evaluating members of the Board.
4. Tell us about Board orientation and training.
5. How well does the Board assess its own effectiveness?
6. Does the Board committee structure provide appropriate financial and other oversight?
7. What major challenges face the school? Do you see the Board and administration as being equipped to face those challenges?
8. Please give an example of a recent policy decision and explain the process by which the Board arrived at its decision. How was the decision communicated from the Board to the appropriate constituencies?

9. Are decisions regarding budget, tuition, and salary levels, and other financial matters handled in a way in which the full Board takes responsibility for them after thorough discussion?
  
10. Does the Board grant an appropriate degree of autonomy to the administration in order to carry out policies effectively and in an unimpeded fashion?

## WRITING THE REPORT

The Report is the culmination of the 3.5-day visit and brings together the findings of the Visiting Team.

**Format and Style:** The Director of Accreditation will provide a template. Chairs can determine format for preparation of the report such as placing the files on a Google Drive (or comparable). NJAIS will open and share the Google Doc.

- Font: Please use 12-point *Calibri*, *Garamond*, or *Times New Roman*, throughout the report
- Add page numbers to the bottom of pages.
- Lower, Middle, Upper School, Self-Study, and Visiting Team should be **capitalized** throughout the report, as well as titles, i.e., Board Chair, Business Manager, Head of School, etc.
- Please use the Harvard comma in a sequence.

### Content:

- Title page: listing the school, its location, and the dates of the visit.
- Listing of the Visiting Team, their titles, their schools, and locations.
- Introduction written by the Chair. This should include some school history, culture, a comment about the Self-Study Report, and a general overview of the visit.
- Basic statistics about the school including:
  - Date founded
  - Coed/single sex
  - Day/boarding
  - Grades covered by the school
  - Number of sections for each grade
  - Number of students enrolled (boy/girl)
  - Number of faculty (full/part-time)
  - Faculty/student ratio
  - Facilities summary
- The bulk of the report is made up of the individual sub-committee reports. Each one consists of a narrative section describing the criteria area and listing anything not in agreement with the Self-Study or not consistent with the school's mission and philosophy. This is followed by a list of commendations and recommendations.

To facilitate this part of the report and insure consistency:

- Commendations are phrased as, “**The school is commended for...**”
- Recommendations are phrased as, “**The Visiting Team recommends that the school...**”
  
- Put a **bullet point** in front of each recommendation and commendation. (Do NOT number these.)
  
- Opening verbs for recommendations might include:
  - Address
  - Determine
  - Formalize
  - Review...with an eye to...
  - Articulate
  - Develop
  - Identify
  - Strive for...
  - Assess
  - Enhance
  - Implement
  - Undertake
  - Broaden
  - Ensure
  - Institute
  - Consider
  - Clarify
  - Establish
  - Increase
  - Define
  - Find
  - Pursue or vigorously pursue
  
- Avoid the use of “should,” “must,” or “continue to.”

If the recommendation is one that the school has identified and included in the Self-Study Report, acknowledge that by including in the recommendation “*as indicated in the Self-Study,*” or “*the school follow its own recommendation...*”

Except under unusual circumstances, the number of commendations and recommendations in the sub-committee’s report should be approximately equal in number, and generally recommendations should not exceed commendations. In most reports, there are between 3-5 commendations and recommendations. (see p. 68 for a sample sub-committee report)



## Sample Recommendations

<i>Not so good...</i>	<i>Better...</i>
Hire a full-time assistant to work in the Admission Office.	Review staffing in the Admission Office in light of the increased number of applications.
Use a newsletter to keep regular contact with alumni.	Establish regular effective contact with alumni.
Consider increasing the number of computers in the computer lab so that each student in the lab has a computer.	With an eye toward the school's mission and the department's goals, determine the optimal number of computers needed to support the academic program.
Examine the quality of the meals and the snacks being served.	In line with the school's goal regarding a healthy body, ensure that food served for snacks and lunch is nutritious and appealing.

As a conclusion to the “heart” of the report, there should be a list, in descending order of priority, of *Major Commendations* and *Major Recommendations*. The major recommendations usually reflect themes of a global nature. They will be mostly drawn from the body of the report but **MUST INCLUDE A RECOMMENDATION ON ANY STANDARD NOT MET**. There are usually between 5-8 major commendations and 5-8 major recommendations.

## Final Section

The final section of the Visiting Team's report consists of gratitude to the school for its hospitality and points the school towards the next step in the evaluation process – the study of the commendations and recommendations leading to the strengthening of the program, and ultimately, school improvement.

## Sample Thank You Section

*The Visiting Team is truly grateful for the multiple courtesies extended to us during our stay. Faculty, students, parents, and Trustees were universally kind and considerate. Whether it was the umbrellas to protect us from the rain, delicious food, children holding doors, proactive teachers and students helping us find our way—we felt entirely welcomed and were able to do our work knowing that our observations and words would be regarded by the school as a thoughtful complement to your Self-Study Report.*

## What to Avoid

- Under no circumstances should the report make any comment about the likelihood of the school's securing or failing to secure accreditation.
- Generalizations. Recommendations should be specific and precise.
- Singling out any employee by name or title, with the exception of the Head of School.
- The use of "should" or "must."
- Recommendations that will have major budgetary implications such as adding a program, facilities, or equipment, unless this has been stated in the Self-Study Report and confirmed by the Head of School. Additional staff should be recommended with tremendous care; the Accreditation Chair may also want to discuss this with the Head of School.
- Advocating positions that the school has not taken, remembering that the role of the Visiting Team is to determine if the school's stated mission is being realized.
- Philosophical recommendations that are clearly impossible because of financial or physical limitations. Recommendations that are realistic and achievable are the only ones that will be of value to the school

# Section IV: Appendices

## NJAIS Accreditation Standards

### Definitions:

- **Standard Met:** The school satisfies the NJAIS Standard.
  - **Standard Met with Comment:** The school technically satisfies the NJAIS Standard; however, there are areas that require improvement.
  - **Standard Not Met:** The school does not meet the NJAIS Standard.
- 

The NJAIS Standards consist of these major sections:

- I. Mission/Philosophy
- II. Institutional Leadership
- III. Educational Program
- IV. Technology
- V. Advancement
- VI. Finance and Operations
- VII. Residential Schools / Homestay Programs (if applicable)
- VIII. Schools Affiliated with Religious Organizations/Faith-Based Institutions (if applicable)

## I MISSION/PHILOSOPHY

### A. Mission/Philosophy

1. The school has a clearly stated mission/philosophy statement that is reviewed periodically and approved by the Board of Trustees.
2. The mission/philosophy informs school decisions and programs.
3. The school communicates its mission/philosophy to all constituents.

### B. School Climate and Culture

4. The climate and culture of the school reflect the school's mission/philosophy.

### **C. Community Relations**

5. The school strives to maintain good relationships with the community in which it is located.

### **D. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

6. In keeping with its mission/philosophy, the school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect others and value diversity.

### **E. Global Awareness**

7. The school strives to promote a culture of global understanding that is appropriate to the school's mission, size, and means.

### **F. Environmental Stewardship**

8. The school strives to promote a commitment to environmental responsibility and stewardship for current and future generations.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### **A. Governance**

9. The school is incorporated as a non-profit organization and has been granted by the Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 status or an equivalent form of tax-exempt status.
10. The school and its governance structure are organized with appropriate independence from other organizations or individuals as to ensure its ability to fulfill its mission and plan for its future.
11. The Board reviews and maintains Bylaws and keeps minutes of meetings that conform to laws and regulations.
12. The Board develops and regularly reviews Board written policies in a Policy Manual.
13. The Board has sole fiduciary responsibility for the school and ensures that adequate financial resources and facilities are provided for the institution.
14. The Board has appropriate policies and procedures to support the creation, review, and approval of an annual operating and capital budget, as well as short and long-range financial plans.

15. The Board engages in regular strategic planning and documents in writing the elements of that plan.
16. The Board understands its central role in development/institutional advancement and actively supports these efforts.
17. The Board demonstrates effective boundaries between the policy-making role of the Board and the role of the Head of School as educational leader and manager of school day-to-day operations.
18. The Board provides a written contract for the Head of School that sets forth major responsibilities, a mutually agreed upon plan of evaluation of the Head, compensation and benefits, the term of employment, a required termination notice, and ensures the Head's right to address the Board with regard to situations in which the Head's position might be at risk.
19. The Board ensures stability in transitions of Head and Board leadership and provides transition planning.
20. The Board has an effective process to identify, cultivate, and select new members to its Board.
21. The school provides for the orientation of new trustees and requires ongoing professional development for the Board of Trustees as a whole.
22. The Board has a regular, clearly defined, and well-administered program of annual evaluation for itself as an entity and for individual Board members.
23. The Board reviews annually and members sign individually a conflict of interest and confidentiality statement.
24. The Board ensures that the school has adequate provision for risk assessment, mitigation, and management, including regular review of best risk mitigation practices and the transfer of liability, property, and casualty risk through appropriate insurance.
25. The Board carries Directors' and Officers' insurance and annually reviews the policy.

## **B. Administration**

26. The administration is organized in a manner that enables it to carry out the mission/philosophy of the school.

27. Faculty, administration, and staff members are sufficient in number to accomplish the work for which they are responsible.
28. The school provides ongoing opportunities for professional growth.
29. The school has a clearly defined and well-administered process for supervision and evaluation of faculty, administration, and staff.
30. There are clearly articulated channels by which members of all constituency groups (including faculty, parents, students, alumnae/i) can communicate meaningfully with school administrators.

### **C. Human Resources**

31. The Head of School determines that all the members of the faculty, administration, and staff are qualified for their positions and responsibilities, and are committed to the mission/philosophy of the school.
32. The school conducts pre-employment fingerprint clearance and comprehensive background checks on all employees, volunteers, and vendors who are in a position to have unaccompanied, routine contact with students.
33. Personnel practices provide ethical treatment among all faculty, administrators, and staff with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions.

## **III. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

### **1. Curriculum and Instruction**

34. All school programs (including early childhood, residential (boarding and homestay), extended care, online, etc.) stem from the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, are consistent with the mission/philosophy of the school, and are reviewed regularly.
35. Congruent with the school's mission/philosophy, the school's programs demonstrate consideration for intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, and ethical education of students. The program encourages freedom of inquiry, respects diversity of viewpoints, and promotes critical thinking.
36. The school demonstrates responsible and ongoing understanding of current educational research and best practices consistent with its mission.
37. The school provides evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for the collection and use in school decision-making of data (internal and external) about student learning, for both current and past students.

38. The school has a clear process for evaluating individual student progress and reporting to parents or guardians on a periodic basis.

## **2. Remote Instruction**

39. The school's remote instruction stems from the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, is consistent with the mission/philosophy of the school, and is reviewed regularly.

## **3. Support Services: Learning Support, Counseling, Advising, Health, and Wellness**

40. Consistent with its mission/philosophy, the school's program has sufficient range for the learning styles, developmental needs, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the students enrolled in the school.

41. The school provides advisory, guidance, and counseling services to its students that are consistent with its mission/philosophy, either directly or through referral.

42. The school provides appropriate health services for students and employees that are administered and carried out by personnel who have appropriate training and experience.

43. The school has a process to ensure that it demonstrates compliance with all statutory regulations.

## **4. Discipline**

44. Discipline practices are humane and mindful of the inherent dignity in every student. Corporal punishment is not an acceptable practice.

## **5. Secondary School and College and Career Counseling**

45. The school has in place a procedure for follow-up on graduate success, and utilizes resulting data to assess its goals and programs.

## **6. Co-Curricular Activities and Athletics**

46. The co-curricular activities reflect the mission/philosophy of the school.

## **IV. TECHNOLOGY**

47. The school has an effective information technology program that addresses communication, administration, and instruction.

## **V. ADVANCEMENT**

### **A. Enrollment Management: Admissions, Retention, and Financial Aid**

48. The school's admissions policies and procedures both reflect and enhance the school's mission.

49. The school invests adequate institutional resources in its efforts to promote parent satisfaction and support robust student retention.

50. The school's financial aid program both reflects and enhances the school's mission.

### **B. Marketing and Communications**

51. The school's marketing and communications plans serve to strengthen the school's reputation both internally and in the broader community.

52. The school employs methods of communicating with its stakeholders that are appropriate to the school's mission, size, and means.



### **C. Development/Fundraising**

- 53. The school's development efforts are well coordinated, congruent with the school's mission/philosophy, and adequately support the current and future needs of the school.
- 54. The school engages key constituents including parents, alumni, and other members of the community in advancement activities congruent with its mission/philosophy.

## **VI. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

### **A. School Finance and Financial Management**

- 55. The school has sufficient resources to meet its financial needs.
- 56. The school has appropriate policies and procedures for managing the financial resources of the school.
- 57. The financial responsibilities of parents/guardians are stated and published.

### **B. Facilities**

- 58. The school's facilities and grounds are adequate to support its mission and program and are responsibly maintained.

### **C. Safety**

- 59. The school is safe, healthy, and secure for all members of the school community. Effective and well-established policies and procedures exist and are acted upon to protect children and adults alike.
- 60. Preventative and emergency health, safety, and security procedures are clear and well documented, and include a crisis management plan for both on and off-campus activities.

#### **D. Record Keeping**

61. The school has policies and procedures that govern the retention, maintenance, and use of personnel, financial, corporate, legal, health and safety, and student records, including print and digital records. All records are protected against catastrophic loss and are available only to authorized personnel.

#### **VII. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS/ HOMESTAY PROGRAMS (if applicable)**

Note: Residential schools refer to boarding schools. Homestay students refer to enrolled students who reside off campus with host families, not with parents or other relatives or legal guardians, regardless of whether they are placed by an agency or not.

62. The school's residential/homestay programs reflect and enhance the school's mission, provide a rich experience for students, and are integrated into the life of the school community as a whole.

63. The school's residential/homestay programs are staffed appropriately, particularly with respect to the portion of the day outside regular classroom hours, including evening, weekend, and vacation activities. Health, safety, and communication with parents are under the purview of the school.

64. The school provides for the particular needs of its international students.

#### **VIII. SCHOOLS AFFILIATED WITH RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS**

65. The independent religiously-affiliated/faith-based school provides in its Bylaws a clear statement of its religious identity.

66. A clearly stated policy, outlining the relationship of the school to its sponsoring organization and the responsibilities of each, is included in the school's Bylaws and/or policy handbook.

67. There shall be a provision in the school's Bylaws for a Board of Trustees that shall be elected according to the guidelines established by the governing body of the affiliated religious organization/faith-based institution and in agreement with the school. Any nominee to the school's Board of Trustees from the affiliated religious organization/faith-based institution must meet the standards of membership for Trustees and go through the same vetting, nominating, election, and orientation process as all other Board members.
  
68. The school has a clearly articulated statement of its religious goals, and these are reflected in its policies, practices, and school culture and are communicated to all constituents.

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**NJAIS Standards for Accreditation approved by the NJAIS Board of Trustees in January 2021.**

## **Sample Program Sub-Committee Report – Science**

Science at Sample School is designed to give students an understanding of science topics, cultivate an awareness of the “big picture,” and nurture engaged, thoughtful observers of the world around them. The understanding of science is described as factual interpretation through the rigorous use of the Scientific Method as a discipline for seeking truth; the teaching of science is in keeping with the mission of the school.

Science classes we observed were interactive. Students were engaged in their work and displayed ownership of what they were doing and learning. Leadership was demonstrated through presentations, and the rapport between teacher and student suggested the science lab is a place for asking questions and thinking critically.

Lower School and Middle School classes meet in rooms specifically built as science labs. However, when Sample School moved into the new building, many materials and supplies were lost or damaged, and the department is still replenishing equipment. This is being accomplished partly through grants applied for and received by the science teachers. The Lower School science room does not have a SMART Board but does have access to a laptop cart. Students readily and easily use laptops as part of science instruction.

The Lower and Middle Schools make attempts to integrate and reinforce ideas across disciplines wherever possible. In one Lower School lesson, students used the laptops to conduct an Internet search on minerals, with a secondary objective to determine and document a reliable on-line source.

The curriculum documents provided are in two different formats. The scope and sequence for certain grade levels was somewhat thin; our sense is that students are learning more than is reflected in the documents, but we cannot substantiate this.

### **The school is commended for:**

- cultivating a love of science and a comfort with scientific methods and procedures that is in keeping with the values of the school’s Mission and Philosophy
- integrating other content areas with science
- hiring science teachers with backgrounds in both teaching and science
- holding a school-wide Science Fair each year.

### **The Visiting Team recommends that the school:**

- document the scope and sequence using a more uniform document so parents, teachers, and students can easily understand the curriculum
- analyze the scope of the Middle School program by comparing the curriculum to model Middle School science curricula. Expand and refine the curriculum in light of this analysis
- seek and invite expert guest speakers in the community to address current issues and serve as role models of leadership for the students
- identify assessment tools used in the grades K – 3.



## CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

I understand that as a Visiting Team member all information and documents I acquire, whether in hard copy or electronic version, regarding a school seeking accreditation by NJAIS, except to the extent the information and documents are a matter of public record, are confidential and not to be forwarded, copied, or disclosed in any matter to any person outside of the Visiting Team and NJAIS Accreditation Committee. In addition, all discussions between Visiting Team members and reports to or discussions with the Accreditation Committee regarding a school are likewise confidential and not to be disclosed.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

I understand that I am expected to disclose any possible conflict of interest that I might have with the school being visited, thereby preventing me from making impartial considerations. Should a conflict of interest be made evident during a visit, it is expected that I will recuse myself from voting on Standards for Accreditation

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Title or Position \_\_\_\_\_

School Being Visited \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Visit \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This form needs to be signed and returned to NJAIS prior to reading the school's Self-Study Report.

Thank you.

Email to: [lcampisi@njais.org](mailto:lcampisi@njais.org)

## NJ AIS EXPENSE VOUCHER

### Visiting Team Member's Expenses:

Mileage \_\_\_\_\_ miles @ current IRS mileage rate \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Tolls (attach receipts) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Meals (if necessary during travel. Attach receipts) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Chair's Expenses:

Travel Expenses (both visits)  
(List and attach receipts) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Meals en route \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Car rental expenses (both visits) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretarial, copying, postage, and telephone expenses (itemize) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that these expenses were incurred in connection with the evaluation of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Print Name)

**To the school:** Please arrange to have checks prepared for distribution to the Visiting Team members before their departure.

The Accreditation Chair may request payment for travel expenses at this time with an additional payment for non-travel expenses to be made at a later date, OR may submit one request for all expenses at the end of the process.

## ACCREDITATION CHAIR EVALUATION FORM

Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Visit \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the performance of the Accreditation Chair in the following areas using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent and 1 being weak.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-visit communications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to work well with the rest of the Visiting Team
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inspiring
- \_\_\_\_\_ Insightful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Thorough
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to ask good questions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Observation Skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to write well
- \_\_\_\_\_ Professionalism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to work efficiently
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maintains confidentiality
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ability to organize the tasks, duties, and overall visit

Would you recommend this person for Chairing another Visiting Team?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastically
- \_\_\_\_\_ With reservations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

Comments:

Name of Visiting Team Member: \_\_\_\_\_

## VISITING TEAM MEMBER EVALUATION FORM

Visiting Team Member \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Visit \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the performance of the Visiting Team member in the following areas using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent and 1 being weak.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ability to work well with the rest of the Visiting Team

\_\_\_\_\_ Ability to ask good questions

\_\_\_\_\_ Observation Skills

\_\_\_\_\_ Ability to write well

\_\_\_\_\_ Professionalism

\_\_\_\_\_ Ability to work efficiently

\_\_\_\_\_ Maintains confidentiality

Would you recommend this person for another Visiting Team?

\_\_\_\_\_ Enthusiastically

\_\_\_\_\_ With reservations

\_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

Comments:

Name of Visiting Team Chair \_\_\_\_\_



## VISITING TEAM SUPPORT CHECKLIST

Name tags should be available at the hotel for all Visiting Team members upon their arrival. Throughout the visit, all faculty and staff should wear name tags as well.

Outside of each classroom the schedule should be posted for that room's use throughout the three days of the visit, including for each period of the day the teacher's name, grade level, subject area, etc.

The Visiting Team's workrooms, in both the school and the hotel, must remain **off-limits** to other school personnel and community members for the duration of the visit. The following materials and supplies should be on hand:

- Computers and printers, as arranged in advance
- A "Required Documents" area containing all required and supplemental materials (on site only)
- A map of the campus, and a floor plan with room locations for each of the buildings
- A list of school personnel, including job titles, classroom/office locations, and phone extensions
- A complete schedule by division, with "bells" indicated
- A binder including faculty and administrator schedules for all three days of the visit
- Yearbook, view book, and other publications
- Supplies:
  - Pens, pencils, and markers
  - Paper for printer
  - Pads of paper
  - Stapler
  - Post-It Notes
  - Scotch tape
  - Flash drives
  - File folders

**And above all...plenty of non-alcoholic beverages and healthy snacks!**

## Section V: Case Studies

1. It is becoming increasingly apparent that several one-person academic departments at the school you are visiting are weak. Reports from students, faculty, parents, and trustees contain criticism and concern about the library, the computer department, and the second grade, each of which are the responsibility of individual faculty members. The Visiting Team members working on these particular areas concur with this sentiment. You are concerned that any attempt to address these problems in the report will unfairly undermine the efforts (and self-esteem) of the hard-working but less-than-creative individual teacher in each area.
  - What would you do?
  - How do you lead the Visiting Team?
  - What recommendation would be written in the report?
  
2. The leadership style of the school that you are visiting is described in the Self-Study as being “open, collaborative, and inclusive. The Head has an open-door policy that all embrace.” However, at the Sunday afternoon reception, a trustee and a member of the faculty approach you and report that the Head is rarely present around school, is largely inaccessible, and makes all-important decisions by himself.
  - How do you respond?
  - What are your next steps with the Visiting Team?
  - What else does the Visiting Team need to know?
  - What recommendation would be written in the report?
  
3. While talking to a member of the maintenance department, you are told that there are significant amounts of lead paint remaining in the Lower School classroom wing. There is no mention of this in the Self-Study, but the Head of School confirmed to you that he thought, “There is still some work to be done in that area.” You ask a Kindergarten teacher if he is aware of the situation, and he reports that he knows about it but jokes that he “keeps the kids from eating too much of it.”
  - What do you do?
  - What else does the Visiting Team need to know?
  - How do you handle this in the report?

4. After what has been a good first day of interviews and class visits, you observe that one team member's style is more like an interrogation rather than an interview. He creates an impression that he is mostly looking for negative information and a number of people on the faculty are beginning to feel that the entire evaluation process is a "witch hunt" and nothing positive can come of it. The Chair was not in the room during these subcommittee meetings and is unaware of this situation.

What do you do?

5. It is Tuesday evening, and the Visiting Team has assembled to share drafts of completed sections, commendations, and recommendations. The following recommendation is read:

*"The Visiting Team recommends that the practice of housing both boys and girls on the same floor and in the same dormitories cease immediately, and that Smith Hall be made into a boys' dorm and Jones Hall into a girls' dorm. Also, appropriate security, policies, and expectations should be set in place as soon as possible to ensure the separation of the genders."*

- How could this recommendation be written to be less prescriptive?
- How do you manage the interference of personal opinions in the writing of recommendations?

Note: NJAIS expresses with gratitude the help from other association Manuals and Guides from which we have adapted sections for this *Guide*.