

NJAIS

New Jersey Association of Independent Schools

NJAIS Accreditation Chair Guide



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SECTION I

Introduction

“To the extent that our activities in school are dedicated to getting learning curves off the charts, what we do is a calling. To the extent that we spend most of our time doing something else in school, we are engaged in a job. ...

Whose learning curve goes off the chart by doing that? It is a revolutionary question whose time has finally come.”

*Roland Barth

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.

Revised and approved by the NJAIS Board of Trustees, 7/11

INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION from the NJ AIS Executive Director and the NJ AIS Director of Accreditation

Dear Accreditation Chairs,

Thank you for undertaking this leadership role for NJ AIS. Through the accreditation process, schools have time for critical self-reflection and improvement, and through evaluation, quality assurance is established. Your role as the Chair of the Visiting Team is absolutely central to the success of this process.

Schools are reminded that the collaborative work that they have done in preparing the Self-Study Report is the most important part of the accreditation process. It is your direction as the Chair of the Visiting Team and the conduct and tone of the Visiting Team members, however, that will allow 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 NJ AIS, 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 assembling this *Chair Guide*, we hope that we are providing you with information that will be helpful as you prepare for the visit, train your committee members, visit the school, and follow-up.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at any point in the process – including while you are on site during the actual visit at the school - if you have any questions or concerns during your role as Accreditation Chair. We 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 as well for SEVP;
- 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 *NJAIS 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 Instruction
 - 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

NJAIS Staff:

While the NJAIS Executive Director oversees the accreditation process for member schools seeking accreditation through NJAIS, the NJAIS Director of Accreditation is the “point person” for a school undertaking accreditation. From an initial site visit to the school, through the training of Steering Committee Chairs, the Director of Accreditation is also available to speak at faculty meetings, board meetings, or with the school community about the accreditation process and the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation. Schools are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of support from the NJAIS staff throughout the accreditation process.

Chair of the Visiting Team:

In consultation with the Head of School, NJAIS selects a seasoned school leader to serve as the accreditation Visiting Team Chair. For larger or multi-campus schools, NJAIS also appoints a Vice- or Co-Chair. The Chair conducts a pre-visit, works on scheduling and assignments for the Visiting Team, oversees the visit, and edits the Visiting Team Report. The Chair follows the NJAIS guidelines, ensures the Visiting Team’s effectiveness, and protects the integrity of the process.

Visiting Team:

The Visiting Team includes experienced faculty members and administrators, including a business manager, from other independent schools with which the school undertaking accreditation does not compete or overlap. Team members are selected to represent different academic and co-curricular disciplines, grade levels, and administrative expertise. All team members are required to sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement.

The size of each Visiting Team is determined by the following general guidelines:

School’s Enrollment	Team Size
50-100	4-5 Members
101-200	4-6 Members
201-300	6-8 Members
301-400	6-8 Members
401-500	8-10 Members
501+	8-12 Members
501+ or multiple campuses	10-15 Members

NJAIS Accreditation Committee:

This committee is responsible for shepherding the NJAIS accreditation process for all member schools. The committee reads all reports and makes recommendations to the NJAIS Board of Trustees regarding schools’ accreditation status. Committee members recuse themselves whenever their own school or a competing school is under consideration.

NJAIS Board of Trustees:

Exercising its responsibility for oversight of the Association's accreditation program, it is the NJAIS Board of Trustees that ultimately approves the accreditation status of its member schools, as recommended by the NJAIS Accreditation Committee.

International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA):

NJAIS is a member of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA). The NJAIS accreditation process has been thoroughly reviewed by ICAISA, a nonprofit association with 19 member accreditors representing schools in the United States and throughout the world. The primary purpose of the Council is to provide quality assurance and accountability for the accreditation programs of its state, regional, and international independent school member associations.

While ICAISA itself does not accredit individual schools, its 19 accrediting members, including NJAIS, have been accrediting schools for decades. ICAISA, which was originally convened in 2002 as the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Commission on Accreditation, has set high standards for accreditation to which it holds each member association accountable. Criteria for effective practice with which all members must comply were agreed upon, model core standards were developed to serve as a point of reference, and a system of peer review was established to assure quality and to support improvement. NJAIS received certification from the NAIS Commission on Accreditation in 2013.

ICAISA's U.S. members are recognized by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Student Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP/SEVIS). NJAIS is also an affiliate member of the Council for American Private Education (CAPE).

NJAIS ACCREDITATION TIMELINE

STEP I – Before the Decennial Visit

12-24 months prior to the anticipated Decennial Visit:

- The Head of School and the NJAIS Director of Accreditation make contact to schedule an initial meeting.
- The NJAIS Director of Accreditation visits the school to meet with the Head of School and others who will be instrumental in the self-study process, including selected senior administrators, the Steering Committee Chair, and perhaps selected members of the Board of Trustees. Topics discussed at this initial meeting include an overview of the accreditation process, budgetary considerations, and the calendar and timeline for carrying out required tasks. This meeting also provides an opportunity for discussion of particular areas of concern for the school.
- The timeline for a school's work will be determined by the anticipated date for the Decennial Visit.

6-12 months prior to the visit:

- After consultation with the Head of School, the NJAIS Executive Director and the Director of Accreditation, a Visiting Team Chair is selected. In some cases, a Co-Chair or Vice-Chair is also appointed.

3-6 months prior to the visit:

- In consultation with the Head of School and NJAIS Executive Director, the Director of Accreditation assembles an appropriate Visiting Team, sends out invitations to candidates, and confirms the participation of its members.
- The Steering Committee continues to meet to monitor progress on the self-study process, to plan for the Decennial Visit, and to prepare for the visits of the NJAIS Director of Accreditation and the Chair of the Visiting Team.
- The NJAIS Director of Accreditation conducts a pre-visit meeting at the school to carry out the following tasks:
 - confer with the Head of School;
 - meet with the Steering Committee Chair/Co-Chairs to discuss the progress of the Self-Study Report;
 - take a tour of the school;
 - review the required documents and discuss progress in the preparation of the "Required Documents";
 - discuss the required fire drill to be conducted during the Decennial Visit, including evacuation and return to the building in silence, and accounting for all constituents;
 - confirm the Visiting Team's housing, work space (at school and in the hotel), and meals;
 - discuss the Visiting Team's schedule;
 - review any special concerns identified by the Head of School.
- Subsequent to the visit of the Director of Accreditation, the Chair of the Visiting Team also conducts a pre-visit to the school to accomplish the following:

- o establish a working relationship with the Head of School;
- o check on any deficiencies found by the Director of Accreditation;
- o review and confirm the Visiting Team's housing, work room (at both the school and the hotel), and meals;
- o confirm the Visiting Team's schedule (**See p. 43 for the Sample Visiting Team schedule**);
- o discuss any sensitive areas or concerns identified by the Head of School;
- o discuss any special conditions including finances, major changes in enrollment, governance, physical facilities, or program.

3-4 months prior to the visit:

- The school delivers a draft copy of the Self-Study Report to the NJAIS Director of Accreditation, who reviews the draft to ensure that it is a complete document.

6 weeks prior to the visit...

- The school delivers to the Director of Accreditation and the Chair of the Visiting Team the final copy of the Self-Study Report. This may be sent electronically, as a hard copy, or both.

1 month prior to the visit:

- The Visiting Team will receive:
 - o a welcome letter from the Visiting Team Chair;
 - o a schedule for the days of the visit;
 - o the school's Self-Study Report, plus any of the required documents that would be beneficial to review in advance of the visit;
 - o other supplementary materials for Visiting Team members (including, for example, bios of the members of the Visiting Team, the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation, NJAIS Accreditation Team Guide, etc.);
 - o logistical information regarding transportation, housing, meals, and technical support, including an invitation to inform the school of particular needs in any of these areas;
 - o a date for a Visiting Team training session with the NJAIS Director of Accreditation.

NJAIS recommends that as many of these materials as possible be made available digitally in one form or another - as Google documents, email attachments, accessed through a login portal on the school's website, sent on a flash drive, or some combination of these methods, best determined by the school. Regardless of the method(s) selected, a well-organized "Required Documents" containing copies of or links to all required materials should also be made available in the Visiting Team workroom at the school.

- The school sends the required financial documents to the Chair of the Visiting Team. (See Appendix F for a list of required documents.)
- Prepare for the Visiting Team's arrival, including completing arrangements for the opening reception and meals, communicating with all constituent groups within the

school community the schedule of classroom visits and meetings, and set-up of the Visiting Team's work spaces in both the school and the hotel. (See **Visiting Team Support Checklist on p. 87**)

STEP II – The Decennial Visit

Over three-and-a-half days, a group of experienced independent school educators, all volunteers in this process, will view the school through the lens of the school's mission and philosophy, determine if the Self-Study Report is an accurate description of what is occurring in the school, and vote on the NJAIS Standards of Accreditation. The Visiting Team does not evaluate individual teachers, staff, or administrators, nor are team members expected to serve as consultants.

The Visiting Team's schedule will include interviews with selected administrators; meetings with groups of trustees, faculty, parents, alumni, and students; observation of a school fire drill; and classroom visits. Classroom visits will be brief, as it is the aim to have every faculty member visited at least once. (See Appendix K for a sample Decennial Visit schedule.)

At the end of the visit, the Chair of the Visiting Team will deliver an oral report to the school community, highlighting major themes that have emerged in the course of the three-and-a-half days. The school will not be informed at this juncture about accreditation status, as the Visiting Team's written report is analyzed by the NJAIS Accreditation Committee, and then the NJAIS Board of Trustees must approve the Accreditation Committee's recommendation on accreditation status.

(See **Sample Visitation Schedule on page 43.**)

STEP III – After the Visit and Follow-up

About 2 weeks after the visit

- The Chair sends a draft copy of the Visiting Team Report to members of the Visiting Team for final comments or corrections.
- The Chair sends a draft copy of the report to the NJAIS Director of Accreditation.
- The Director of Accreditation and NJAIS Executive Director review the report and follow up with the Chair of the Visiting Team as necessary.
- After the draft has been cleared by the Director of Accreditation, Executive Director, and Visiting Team Chair, the Director of Accreditation sends a draft copy of the report to the Head of School, for his/her eyes only, for the purpose of fact-checking, to assess any areas of particular sensitivity, and to ensure due process.
- Once any facts have been checked, the draft of the Visiting Team Report is reviewed again by the Director of Accreditation and Executive Director.
- When the report is in semi-final form, it is sent to the NJAIS Accreditation Committee.

2 – 3 months after the visit

- The NJAIS Accreditation Committee meets to review the Visiting Team Report. (These meetings are usually in late January and June).
 - The Visiting Team Chair (either in person or by telephone or video-conference) presents a brief overview of the school and the visit, summarizes the school's compliance with the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation, and presents the team's recommendation on accreditation.
 - A member of the Accreditation Committee, designated to carry out a close reading of the Visiting Team Report, highlights themes or points not mentioned by the Visiting Team Chair.
 - The Accreditation Committee discusses the report and then votes on a recommendation regarding the school's accreditation status to be presented to the full NJAIS Board of Trustees. A school may be:
 - granted full accreditation
 - granted provisional accreditation with a timeline for coming into compliance with all Standards for Accreditation
 - granted provisional accreditation with a monitoring status
 - deferred accreditation status until, within a limited time, the school comes into compliance with all Standards and ameliorates any other deficiencies
 - denied accreditation
- The Director of Accreditation makes any changes to the final report, as recommended by the Accreditation Committee.
- Following action by the NJAIS Board of Trustees, the NJAIS Executive Director communicates its decision and any required actions in a letter sent to the school's Head and Board Chair. Included in this communication is also the final copy of the Visiting Team Report in hard copy, along with copies of the NJAIS Publicity Policy and the NJAIS Appeals Process (also included in this guide as Appendices N and O).
- The Director of Accreditation communicates the NJAIS Board's decision to the Chair of the Visiting Team, who then relates the action to team members.
- The Director of Accreditation sends a digital copy of the Visiting Team Report to the Head of School
- The Director of Accreditation sends a survey to the Head and the Steering Committee Chair(s) for feedback about the NJAIS accreditation process.

3-4 months after the visit

- The Director of Accreditation visits the Head of School. The purpose of the visit is to:
 - review the Executive Director's letter, including a discussion of any special conditions connected to the decision;
 - discuss with the Head of School the school's perceptions of the accreditation experience
 - provide guidance to the school regarding next steps in the accreditation process, including addressing unmet standards and/or preparing the school's Action Plan.

STEP IV – Action Plan

1 year after the visit

- The school completes work on the Action Plan that contains:
 - Two to four major school-wide goals/initiatives on which the school will focus in the coming years
 - Responses to all of the recommendations of the Visiting Team
- The Action Plan is sent to the NJAIS Accreditation Committee for review.
- Following approval of the Action Plan by the Accreditation Committee, a recommendation on the school's accreditation is forwarded to the NJAIS Board of Trustees for final approval.
- The Executive Director communicates the final decision from the NJAIS Board to the school and the Chair of the Visiting Team.

STEP V - The Five-Year Interim Report and Visit

Five years after the Decennial Visit, the school must compile and write a Five-Year Report in preparation for an interim Five-Year Visit. The purpose of the Five-Year Report and visit is to assist the school in deriving maximum benefit from the accreditation process, ensuring that its Self-Study Report, the Visiting Team's Report, and the school's Action Plan are not "sitting on a shelf somewhere," but are rather living documents, guiding the school in its institutional improvement efforts throughout the 10-year accreditation cycle. The Five-Year Report both provides NJAIS with an update on the state of the school and guarantees ongoing compliance with the NJAIS Standards of Accreditation, including any that have been added since the school's Decennial Visit.

Content of the Five-Year Report:

The Five-Year Report should include the following:

- An introduction prepared by the Head of School, including a description of the process used to prepare the Five-Year Report
- A narrative overview of the state-of-the-school, including any major institutional changes that have occurred since the Decennial Visit
- A report on the status of the broad institutional initiatives or overarching goals that were set forth in the school's Action Plan
- An update on each of the recommendations found in the Visiting Team's Report, including the Visiting Team's recommendation, the school's response to that recommendation as laid forth in the Action Plan, and an update on the current status of each recommendation (in three separate fonts, for ease in reading)
- Brief written responses to the **current** NJAIS Standards (noted as "Standard Met"; "Standard Met with Comment" and include commentary; or "Standard Not Met" with explanation)
- A signed Verification Statement

Documents to Be Included with the Five-Year Report:

- Copy of the Mission Statement
- The school's audit and financial statements for the past two years, including any management letters
- The budget for the current operating year, including year-to-date, projected full-year, and estimated variances
- The current long-term financial plan
- The school's most recent strategic or long-range plan
- The school's current bylaws (for both school and sponsoring organization, if any, and should include purpose, term limits, etc.)
- Copy of the most recent signed Form 990 and evidence of being filed with the IRS
- Board Policy Manual, including:
 - The school's trustee pledge, if applicable;
 - The school's Non-discrimination Policy;
 - The school's Financial Aid Policy;
 - All financial oversight policies, such as investment, endowment, audit, risk management, records retention, etc.;
 - All policies regarding the evaluation, renewal, compensation, and support of the Head of School;
 - All policies and procedures regarding the selection and evaluation of the Board of Trustees.
- Most recent Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statements, signed by each member of the Board
- Copy of the Board's most recent evaluation
- Evidence of the Head's most recent evaluation
- Copy of D&O insurance
- Evidence of fingerprint and background check (on-site evaluation by the Visiting Team)
- Redacted copy of Head's written contract
- Copy of (or a link to) the school's Directors' and Officers' policy and other insurance policies.
- Copies of minutes for the current year's Board meetings
- Copy of succession plan for Board and Head of School
- Copy of the crisis management plan
- Copy of records retention policy
- Evidence of Board member orientation and professional development
- Copies of any graduate surveys
- Fire, health, and safety certificates, inspections, and licenses, including CPR certifications and a record of fire and security drills
- Proof of fire and liability insurance
- Copy or summary of the Board of Trustees' most recent evaluation
- The school's anti-bullying policy
- The school's curriculum guide or maps
- School demographics page to include: school type, date founded, grades, number of students enrolled, number of sections per grade, number of faculty and staff, and facilities breakdown
- Statistical charts and reports from DASL for admissions, development, financial aid, etc.

The Five-Year Visit

NJAIS will appoint a two- or three-member Visiting Team, including (if possible) at least one team member from the original Decennial Visiting Team. A one-day or 1.5-day visit is made to the school and meetings are conducted with all constituencies.

Sample Schedule for the Five-year Visit

The school creates the schedule for the five-year visit and confirms it with the Chair of the Visiting Team. This is a sample schedule that should be adjusted to complement the existing school schedule. All faculty, staff, and students should be informed that there will be visitors on campus for the day. There should be no field trips, major off-campus events, or full-length tests given or videos shown. The school should engage in a “regular” school day. If there is a school assembly or morning meeting, visitors should be included. Name tags, maps of the school, and academic class schedules should be provided for the Visiting Team. For efficiency’s sake, a single room should be assigned for meetings with the Visiting Team. The assigned groups should meet with them in that room.

8:15 a.m.	NJAIS Visiting Team arrives
8:30	Meet with the Head of School (usually held in the Head’s office)
9:00	Attend Assembly/Morning Meeting, if applicable
9:30	Meet with three to five current trustees, including the Board Chair and Treasurer
10:15	Meet with department heads (or team leaders) and a few faculty members
11:00	Meet with students (one to two from each grade level if appropriate, 5 th grade and older)
11:30	Meet with three to four alumnae/i
12:00	Working lunch for the Visiting Team
12:45	Campus tour and brief classroom visits
1:45	Meet with four to five current parents
2:15	Meet with members of the senior administration (without the Head of School)
3:00	Debrief with Head of School
3:30	Team Departs

Note: In cases of large schools, multi-campus schools, or other circumstances, the Visiting Team may extend the Five-Year visit to 1.5 days. The schedule should be adjusted and planned in advance.

After the Five-Year Visit

Following the visit, the Visiting Team writes a report that includes:

- A summary of the campus visit, including commentary on the school's continuing seriousness of purpose relative to the accreditation process
- The nature and effectiveness of the school's progress since the Decennial Visit
- The status of the school in terms of recent changes and future plans
- Commendations and recommendations on various aspects of the school
- An update on compliance with NJAIS Standards for Accreditation

After reviewing the Five-Year Report, the NJAIS Accreditation Committee determines whether any change in the school's accreditation status is warranted. Please note that schools must pass *all* NJAIS Standards to continue with full accreditation status. If all current NJAIS Standards are not met, the school may be placed on provisional accreditation status pending compliance with all Standards, or given a specified period of time to ameliorate any issues. If serious institutional issues have arisen since the Decennial Visit, accreditation may be revoked.

A recommendation on the school's accreditation status is forwarded to the NJAIS Board of Trustees for final approval. Following action by the NJAIS Board, the decision is communicated to the Head of School and Board Chair in a letter from the NJAIS Executive Director.

SECTION II

Chair Duties, Tasks, and Responsibilities

“Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

* Theodore Roosevelt

MASTER CHECKLIST FOR CHAIR

PRE-VISIT

- ___ Sign and return statement of confidentiality/conflict of interest to Director of Accreditation
- ___ Chair pre-visits the school (best accomplished 3-4 months before the Visiting Team visit)
- ___ Confers with Head and others involved in Self-Study Report
 - ___ Take a tour of the school
 - ___ Discuss the preliminary schedule
 - ___ Discuss housing and meals for the Visiting Team; the preference is for school food service and/or catered meals at the school or at the hotel
 - ___ Establish needs for Visiting Team visit and Visiting Team meeting room (room, LCD projector, office supplies, printer, etc.). Reinforce with the Head that the room must be private, secure, and off-limits for school staff during the visit (except for food service professionals setting up meals in the Visiting Team room.)
 - ___ Discuss any special issues or conditions that confront the school including finances, major change in enrollment, governance, leadership, physical plant, or program.
 - ___ Discuss how the accreditation process can support the work of the school and Head
 - ___ Discuss preparation of the document box
 - ___ Chair may request a copy of the previous Five-Year Report
 - ___ Confirm that no tests, quizzes, field trips, or full-period videos will be scheduled during the visit
 - ___ Chair establishes that members of the school community (usually the faculty, administrators, Board members, and staff) will attend Exit Remarks
- ___ Chair sends a letter or email to introduce him or herself to the Visiting Team members. A conference call for introductions can also be used. (**See p. 36 for a Sample Letter.**) Timely communication with the Visiting Team prior to the visit is essential.
- ___ Chair sends an email with the preliminary schedule and an interest survey to Visiting Team members. The Chair may recommend specific preparation to the Visiting Team members such as pre-writing. Emphasis is placed on a review of the NJAIS Standards of Accreditation. Also ask about food allergies or dietary restrictions. Request that each Visiting Team member submit a brief bio of him or herself as a way of introduction.
- ___ Chair designates subcommittee assignments (**see p. 38 for the Subcommittee Assignment Form**)

Directs the team to:

- read the entire Self-Study Report; focus on the section you have been assigned with greater care
- explore the school's website carefully focusing on sub-committee areas
- use post-its, highlight, and take notes in the Self-Study Report
- pre-write a summary
- develop a list of topics and preliminary questions
- write a one to two paragraph summary of your assigned sections

___ Chair informs the school of any special needs for the Visiting Team (computers, LCD, allergies, travel logistics, etc.)

___ Director of Accreditation sends all team members a copy of the confidentiality statement/ conflict of interest for signature and return as well as a copy of the *NJAIS Accreditation Team Member Guide* for review.

___ School sends to Visiting Team members a welcome from the Head of School, the Self-Study (hard and digital), curriculum materials (hard or digital), directions, and information about accommodations and meals.

___ Visiting Team members attend an NJAIS accreditation training session. Chairs will sometimes come to this session to meet team members prior to the visit.

___ Chair confers with Director of Accreditation about the format for writing the report – Google Drive or other set up, at the discretion of the chair. NJAIS will open and share the Google Doc.

___ Director of Accreditation provides to the Chair a template for the report and a spreadsheet for standards voting.

OPENING VISITING TEAM MEETING

___ Introductions

___ Logistics: Everyone checked in, transportation, food, personal needs

___ Emphasis on confidentiality – before the visit starts, during the visit, and after the process ends.

___ Provide overview of accreditation process (*PowerPoint* from NJAIS if team members have not viewed this at training or independently)

___ Analyze and discuss the school's mission statement and philosophy

___ Review tips from Accreditation and Visiting Team Training Guides

- ___ Discuss the role of evaluators as unobtrusive observers, not judging individual teachers or serving as consultants.
- ___ Review sub-committees and assignments
- ___ Review the details of the schedule, particularly when reports will be shared.
- ___ Establish when to hold the fire drill.
- ___ Focus on the school's Self-Study
- ___ Review NJAIS Standards for Accreditation and voting
- ___ Construction of the report – set up for writing; discuss guidelines; technology access and use; use of Harvard comma; other formatting issues.
- ___ Expense forms – submit mileage, tolls, and food (longer trips) as soon as possible; school may reimburse before the end of the visit
- ___ Reminder to wear name tags at all times at the school.

ON-SITE TEAM VISIT

- ___ At the initial reception, be prepared to present a brief overview of the accreditation process and to have Visiting Team members introduce themselves. (**See p. 57 for sample opening remarks**) Visiting Team introductions are brief: name, school name, title.
- ___ Review all documents
- ___ Visit classrooms
- ___ Document visits with all faculty, administrators, and staff (chart or list – paper or digital)
- ___ Adhere to the schedule for meetings
- ___ Write and review reports

REPORT – (Generally 40 - 60 pages)

- ___ VOTE, complete Standards Voting Record; at the end of the Visiting Team's Report
 - **Standard Met**
 - **Standard Met with Comment**
 - **Standard Not Met**

- ___ Contents – a template is provided by the Director of Accreditation
 - ___ Title Page (School, Location, Dates of Visit)
 - ___ Visiting Team Listing (names, titles, and schools)
 - ___ Chair's Introduction (including history, culture, comments on the Self-Study Report and overall visit)
 - ___ Demographics (This page will be provided by the school.)

 - ___ Sub-Committee Reports
 - ___ Narrative Section describing criteria and listing anything not in agreement with Self-Study Report
 - ___ Sub-Committee commendations, with a bullet point preceding each commendation and recommendation, should read:
 - "The school is commended for. . ."**
 - "The Visiting Team recommends that the school. . ."**

 - ___ Major Commendations (usually 5-8)
 - ___ Major Recommendations (usually 5-8)

 - ___ **Standard Met with Comment** and **Standard Not Met** must have a clear explanation and recommendation.

 - ___ Final Section: Thank the school and point to the next step in the evaluation process – the study of the commendations and recommendations leading to the strengthening of the program and overall school improvement.

 - ___ Include a copy of Exit Remarks in the Visiting Team report.

EXIT REMARKS

- _____ Exit Remarks are presented by the Chair during a meeting on the last afternoon to the school community. As a most important introduction to these remarks, indicate that there will be no opportunity for questions. Visiting Team members should make every attempt to attend this final session of the visit. (See p.62 for sample Exit Remarks)
- _____ The Chair should share the report with the Visiting Team and the Director of Accreditation prior to the meeting with the school community.
- _____ The remarks may capture and paraphrase some of the commendations and recommendations without reading them exactly. The school should be thanked for hosting, and uplifting quotes from interviews can be shared.
- _____ A written copy of the Exit Remarks is included in the final team report.

CONCLUSION of the VISIT

- _____ Collect all Self-Study reports from Visiting Team members for return to the school, minus all annotations. The Chair will retain his/her copy until the report is finalized.
- _____ Direct the Visiting Team to shred any pages of the Self-Study or notes that contain your personal annotations. After ensuring that the report is “saved,” team members delete files from computers and/or thumb drives.
- _____ Delete files from the computers and thumb drives once all sub-committee reports are secured and saved in the team report.
- _____ Collect expense vouchers and submit them to the Business Manager for payment to Visiting Team members. This is sometimes completed before the team leaves the school. (If appropriate, double mileage from home to school to cover the return trip home.)
- _____ Distribute Chair Evaluation forms to Visiting Team Members. Assign a team member to collect all of the evaluations, place them in the self-addressed, stamped envelope, and send directly to NJAIS OR hand deliver them to Director of Accreditation onsite.
- _____ Visiting Team Member Evaluations are to be completed by the Chair and sent to NJAIS.
- _____ Tidy the team room.

POST-VISIT

- _____ The draft of the report is submitted to the Visiting Team members within 10 days of the visit. Team members are to check for accuracy, completion, and final edits, and return to the Chair as soon as possible.
- _____ The report is then sent to the Director of Accreditation within two to three weeks of the visit.
- _____ The Director of Accreditation shares the report with the NJAIS Executive Director for any questions or issues of clarity.
- _____ The Director of Accreditation sends the draft report to the Head of School to check facts, for any areas of sensitivity, and for due process.

SECTION III

Pre-Visit Preparations by Chair

“All things are ready, if our minds be so.”

~ Shakespeare

SITE PRE-VISIT

Chair Responsibilities

Two to six months prior to the accreditation visit, the Chair meets with the Head of School for a tour and to discuss the Self-Study Report. During this meeting, details for the Team visit should be worked out and some preliminary scheduling done. Meals and housing needs for the Visiting Team, and meeting spaces should also be established at this time (secure on-campus room and a workroom at the hotel). **See checklist on page 20.** The Chair should give the Head of School a list of things that the Visiting Team will need during its visit (see p. 87). This list is also included in the schools *NJAIS Self-Study Guide for Accreditation*.

Logistics of the Visiting Team room, such as wireless and printer access and an LCD projector should be discussed. A preliminary schedule should be established for meetings with the Board members, parents, students, faculty, administrative team, and alumni. For the visit, the school should also supply the Visiting Team with a large list of all faculty, staff, and administrators so that the Visiting Team can initial this as each person is interviewed. This list can be printed, placed on poster boards, in electronic form, etc. It may contain photos of faculty and staff members.

This site pre-visit is also a good time for a candid Head-to-Head conversation, to confer about any special issues that confront the school, and to discover any areas that need special attention during the visit or in the report. These areas may be discussed with the Visiting Team at the first meeting.

Since the NJAIS Director of Accreditation visits and does a document check, this is no longer part of the Chair's pre-visit, unless there were essential documents missing. **(See the Essential Documents List on p. 29).** The Director of Accreditation and Chair should consult regarding the school's preparation.

Establish with the Head of School that the school community (teachers, administrators, staff, trustees, selected parents, **no students**) should attend Exit Remarks on the final day of the visit. Following those remarks, the Visiting Team will depart immediately; many schools hold some informal reception for faculty, staff, and administration as a culmination to the visit.

The Chair or NJAIS Director of Accreditation may make a second visit to the school if necessary.

Sub-Committee Assignments

The Chair makes sub-committee assignments based on Visiting Team member interest surveys (**see p. 37 for the Visiting Team Member Interest Survey**), 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 Report. 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. It is not recommended that Visiting Team members conduct interviews alone, unless absolutely necessary.

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.

A chart of subcommittees has been provided in this guide. Dates and times of report deadlines should be added to the chart for distribution to the Visiting Team. (**see p. 38 for the Sub-Committee Assignment Chart**).

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS LIST

The following documents will be provided during the visit. Some documents will be made available during the Chair's pre-visit. During the team visit, the appropriate sub-committees will review documents applicable to their sub-committee.

I. MISSION/PHILOSOPHY

A. Mission/Philosophy

- Statement of the school's Mission/Philosophy
- Evidence of the formal publication of the school's mission (such as the school's website, newsletters, admissions materials, parent and student handbooks, etc.)

B. School Climate and Culture

- Copies or summaries of any parent, faculty, or student climate/culture surveys
- Any published statements that describe the school's approach to a healthy student culture and climate

C. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)

- The school's diversity/equity/inclusion policy, if this exists
- Any published statements or documents that affirm the school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)
- Evidence of the Board's role in the school's commitment to DEIB that may be reflected in Board minutes, strategic planning, and recruitment of new Board members
- School professional development offerings focusing on DEIB
- Description of specific curricular elements that demonstrate the school's commitment to DEIB
- Evidence of faculty, staff, and administration attendance at DEIB workshops and events

D. Global Awareness

- Any published statements or documents that affirm the school's commitment to global awareness and education

E. Environmental Sustainability

- The school's sustainability policy, if this exists

- Any published statements or documents that affirm the school's commitment to sustainable practices and/or environmental/sustainability education

II. INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A. Governance

- Copy of the original Charter and/or Articles of Incorporation
- Copy of the school's 501(c)3
- The school's current bylaws (for both school and sponsoring organization, if any, and should include purpose, term limits, etc.)
- Board Policy Manual, including:
 - The school's trustee pledge, if applicable;
 - The school's Non-discrimination Policy;
 - The school's Financial Aid Policy;
 - All financial oversight policies, such as investment, endowment, audit, risk management, records retention, etc.;
 - All policies regarding the evaluation, renewal, compensation, and support of the Head of School;
 - All policies and procedures regarding the selection and evaluation of the Board of Trustees.
- List of current members of the Board of Trustees, including occupations, year elected to the Board, committee assignments, relationship to school (parent, alumna/us, etc.)
- Most recent Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statements, signed by each member of the Board
- Calendar of Board meetings and committee meetings for the current year
- Agendas and minutes of Board meetings for the past year
- A sample set of handouts provided for Trustees at a regular Board meeting
- Copy or summary of the Board's most recent evaluation
- The school's current strategic plan and/or long-range planning documents
- The school's most current long- and short-term financial plans
- The current operating budget, including year-to-date, projected full-year, and estimated variances
- Redacted copy of Head's written contract (for Visiting Team Chair and Business Officer's eyes only)
- Copy of (or a link to) the school's Directors' and Officers' policy and other insurance policies.

B. Administration

- Organizational chart depicting administrative roles and reporting relationships
- Job descriptions for all administrative, faculty, and staff positions

- A listing of faculty, administration, and staff participation in professional development opportunities for the past year
- Copies of the most recent performance evaluations for all faculty, administrators, and staff

C. Human Resources

- Templates for faculty, administration, and staff contracts or letters of agreement
- Copy of (or link to) the school's policy on background checks and fingerprinting and evidence that all employees, vendors, and those in regular contact with students have been fingerprinted and had background checks
- Evidence that the school is in compliance with State Statute P.L. 2018, c.5, the NJ "Pass the Trash" law
- The school's Employee Handbook with indication of frequency of update (including the grievance policy and procedure, the school's whistleblower policy, and the school's HIB Policy)

III. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A. Program Overview

B. Program Analysis

Provide a link to the school's curriculum guide or maps that describe this portion of the school's educational program, whether by grade level, division, or discipline.

C. Teaching and Learning

1. Curriculum and Instruction

- Copies of alumni, parents, HSSSE, or CWRA surveys, if any
- School calendar
- Class schedules
- Link to remote learning
- List of field trips or off-campus trips in the past year
- Samples of student progress reports and interim reports, by division

2. Remote Learning

- Documents detailing Remote Learning policies, protocols, requirements
- Remote Learning schedules - include synchronous and asynchronous offerings
- Assessments of Remote Learning (any surveys)

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

- Crisis Management Plan

- Emergency Information Cards
- Parent/Guardian authorization forms
- Immunization Forms
- Medical Alert (special issues)
- Physical examinations and Health Forms
- First aid procedures
- Evidence of AED training / compliance with Janet's Law
- Evidence of CPR training
- Medical Release Form
- Policies and procedures regarding severe allergies, emergency medications, and the disbursement of routine medications
- Blood-borne pathogens plan
- Accident Report Form
- Concussion Policy
- Copies of any policies or procedures that the school has adopted to guarantee student safety and wellness in the athletic program.
- Copy of health inspection
- Certifications and documents for food services
- Sample of food service menus, if applicable.
- Counsel-Out Policy

4. Discipline

- Copy of any Discipline Policies (This may be in the Student-Parent Handbook. Provide the link.)

5. Secondary School and College Counseling

- List of the secondary/college choices of the school's graduates over the past three years
- Evidence of any survey of graduates for evidence of their preparation data collection, analysis, and interpretation

6. Co-curricular Activities

- List of co-curricular activities
- List of athletic programs
- Copy of athletic policies
- Schedule of athletics for past two years
- List of arts performances and exhibitions

IV. TECHNOLOGY

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Copy of any Technology Plan
- Copy of Social Media Policy for Students, Faculty, Administrators, and Parents

V. ADVANCEMENT

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

- All relevant admissions policies, including regarding legacies, siblings, the children of employees, and international students.
- The school's published Financial Aid Policy
- The school's published Tuition Remission Policy
- Copies of recruitment and admissions brochures and application
- Copy of the current enrollment contract
- Copy of any financial aid application

B. Marketing and Communications

- Copy of or a link to school's marketing materials, both internal (e.g. a parent newsletter) and external (e.g. viewbook)
- Provide links or hard copies of a sample of formal communications that are issued by the school on a regular (or somewhat regular) basis to constituent groups that are not currently involved with the school on a daily basis such as grandparents of current students, alumni, parents of alumni; former faculty, staff, and trustees; donors; and friends of the school
- Copy of the Parent Handbook
- Links to school's social media sites
- Copies of Bylaws of the Parents Association and the Alumni Association

C. Development/Fundraising

- Copy of any donor policy and also written pledge commitment, if any
- Annual fund results for last three years
- Capital campaign results, if applicable

VI. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

A. School Finance and Financial Management

- Complete copies of school's last three financial audits, including report title with addresses, management letter (if any), introduction, scope, executive summary, opinion paragraph, auditor's name and auditor's signature
- Management's response to any auditor recommendations
- Copy of the budget for the current operating year, including-year-to-date, projected full-year and estimated variances
- Copy of long-range financial plan
- Copies of all the most recent financial reports that the Board regularly reviews
- Salary and benefits data (for the Chair of the Visiting Team and Business Officer)
- Copy of parent information on tuition, fees, tuition refund insurance
- Copy of IRS Form 990 and supporting schedules

- Short-term and long-term capital expenditure plan
- Copy of insurance inspection letter
- Investment Policy
- Reserve Policy

B. Facilities

- Certificate of Occupancy
- If school's facilities are leased from another organization, describe the terms of this agreement, and provide copies of any relevant documents
- Copy of or link to the school's facilities plan that outlines renewal and replacement schedules
- Report of the latest systematic review of safety issues and practices
- Documents to show that facilities meet applicable local and state public safety and health regulations such as lead and asbestos hazards
- If auxiliary use (evening, weekend, summer, or between-term) is made of the school's facilities, evidence of property and liability insurance, as well as non-profit status

C. Safety

- Provide copies of or links to the policies, plans, and procedures that the school has in place to address the following:
 - Routine safety (arrival and dismissal procedures, on the playground, etc.)
 - Campus security, including school entrances, exits, and grounds
 - Fire and security drills
 - Crisis Management Policy
 - Off-campus emergencies, such as on school trips
 - Transportation safety (including school- or parent-operated cars, buses, vans, etc., if applicable)
 - Storage and use of chemicals and cleaning agents;
 - Use and ventilation of science, kitchen, and shop equipment;
 - Fire extinguishers and AEDs.
 - Copies of all local, state, and federal safety certificates including fire, food service, etc.
 - Written policy for dealing with cases of suspected sexual abuse/sexual harassment as applied to students, faculty, staff, volunteers
 - Policy for investigation, employment termination, and employment references in situations that involve suspected boundary crossing, "grooming" behaviors, or other forms of sexual misconduct on the part of faculty, administrators, or staff

D. Record Keeping

- Copy of or link to the school's Records Retention Policy

VII. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS/ HOMESTAY PROGRAMS (If applicable)

- Copy of or a link to the school's residential life program description or curriculum
- For residential schools, provide copies or links to written policies concerning leaves, privileges, and behavioral expectations that are distributed and explained to students, faculty and staff, and parents/guardians
- Copy of or a link to the school's homestay program description or curriculum.
- Copy of or a link to the job description for the school's homestay coordinator
- Copies of or links to the school's policies, agreements, and guidelines regarding the homestay program and its expectations of students, host families, and parents/guardians
- For homestay programs, copy of or a link to any agency agreement, including any indemnification of the school
- Evidence that the school has been approved to issue I-20's by the US State Department (SEVIS/SEVP)
- Policy for and evidence of criminal background checks and fingerprinting for adults in the boarding or homestay communities, including all who reside or regularly come into contact with students
- Evidence of communication between host family directly with school
- For international boarding students, copy of the international agreement

VIII. SCHOOLS AFFILIATED WITH RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS (if applicable)

- Evidence of the school's religious identity
- Copy of any additional agreement(s) with the religious organization

COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS

SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER

Dear _____, (Name of Visiting Team member)

Re: NJAIS Accreditation Visit to Sample School

Thank you for serving on the accreditation Visiting Team for _____. (Name of School). In just a few short weeks we will gather for what promises to be a most rewarding personal and professional experience. Having served on Visiting Teams before, I can assure you that you will come away with new ideas, perspectives, and a great deal of affirmation about your own work.

To that end, it is my understanding that everyone has received a copy of the school's Self-Study, other descriptive materials, and directions to the hotel and school. Please check into the _____ (hotel) on Sunday or Tuesday, (date) by 2:00 p.m., so that we may gather for a 2:30 p.m. training session. After that session, we will go to the school for a tour and brief welcoming reception. We will return to the hotel for dinner and an organizational meeting that will enable us to "hit the ground running" on the first morning.

Attached is a Visiting Team member interest survey for you to complete and return via email by _____ (specific date). The survey lists the various areas and related standards to be covered in the evaluation. Please select your top four choices (1 = greatest area interest) in both the "General" and "Curriculum" sections. This will help me to allocate the observation and writing assignments. Please know that I will do my best to honor your requests and preferences; however, compromises may have to be made to assure comprehensive coverage of the different areas. Please also let me know if you have any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or require any specific accommodations.

As a way to get to know each other in advance of the visit, please send me a brief copy of your bio of no more than 250 words.

As representatives of NJAIS, our 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 me know and I will make arrangements.) Finally, keep track of and retain receipts for all of your travel expenses. A reimbursement form will be submitted at the conclusion of our visit.

I truly look forward to working with you! In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____.

Sincerely,

Chair Signature

Attachment: Interest Survey

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

	Subcommittee Leader	Subcommittee Member	Subcommittee Member	Date/Time Report Due
Introduction and History				
Demographics				
Mission/Philosophy				
School Climate and Culture				
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging				
Global Awareness				
Environmental Stewardship				
Governance				
Administration				
Human Resources				
Educational Program Overview/Curriculum & Instruction				
English/Language Arts				
History/Social Studies				
World Languages: High School				
Mathematics				
Science				
Performing Arts: Dance, Drama, Music				
Visual Arts				
Physical Education				
Religious Education				
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, Financial Aid				
Marketing and Communications				
Development / Fundraising				
School Finance and Financial Management				
Facilities				
Safety				
Record-Keeping				
Schools Affiliated with Religious Organizations/ Faith-Based Institutions				
Conclusion				
Exit Remarks				

SECTION IV

On-Site Visiting Team Training

“Your real performance standards are not the behaviors you expect, but rather the behaviors you accept.”

~BJ Gallagher

Overview of the Accreditation Process

During your on-site training and orientation of the Visiting Team:

1. Explain the purpose of accreditation.
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. Give an overview of process by using the NJAIS PowerPoint - this presentation will be provided to you by the NJAIS Director of Accreditation.
4. Read the entire Self-Study and focus on assigned areas. Take notes and develop preliminary summaries and questions.
5. Stress that confidentiality is expected both while at the school and back at home schools.
6. Visiting Team members are to ask questions, but not to use "loaded" questions or questions phrased in a negative form. Use the questions provided as a guide.
7. Each faculty member should be visited at least once for about 10-15 minutes. During classroom visits avoid taking notes. Notes should be written outside the classroom. Post a list of faculty members in the Team room and have Visiting Team members initial upon visiting respective classrooms. (Schools will provide this list, sometimes with photos.)
8. Visiting Team members should turn off cellphones and not make or receive calls during classroom visits, Visiting Team deliberations, or other school events (such as the reception).
9. Requests for additional information from the school should be funneled through the Chair or Vice-Chair.
10. Review the format to be used in constructing the sub-committee reports (see sample in appendix).
11. 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 Report
 - the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation
12. Keep reports from sub-committees from becoming arguments – decide when to close

discussion and vote – majority rule. If the issue is one of intense importance and feelings are running high, permit the filing of a minority report with NJAIS.

13. Ask sub-committee members to check several commendations and recommendations as the most important and to identify themes that might be included in the major committee and recommendations and highlight in the Chair's Concluding Exit Remarks.
14. Sub-committee reports should be filed with the Chair in Google Docs, on a thumb drive or as an email attachment. If school computers are used by the Visiting Team, accreditation visit notes and files should not be saved on the hard drive. Again, consider not using school computers at all. A team member may be designated to collect reports and compile the sections of the report.
15. Let the Visiting Team know that there will be no excessively late night meetings.
16. Visiting Team members should be reminded that their basic expenses are paid by the school. Any personal charges to the room bill (such as telephone calls) are to be paid by the individual. Collect expense vouchers for presentation to the school for reimbursement before the Visiting Team members depart on the final day of the accreditation visit.
17. Leave no papers or computer files behind in the Visiting Team room at the conclusion of the visit. Do not remove any materials provided by the school (yearbooks, catalogues, handbooks, etc.).
18. Team Members should make every possible attempt to be in attendance for Exit Remarks on the final day of the visit in order to have closure.

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)

- 12:00 p.m. 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
- 3:00 p.m. Institutional Leadership subcommittee meets with senior administration
Observe dismissal
- 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 Evaluators

The task of a Visiting Team member is twofold: to see if the Self-Study Report 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 Report 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 documents and targeting questions.
- 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 Visiting Team member so always check out what you are seeing or hearing with other members of the Team.
- The final report is a Visiting Team report. This means that you are to bring back to the total Visiting Team your own conclusions and impressions regarding your areas of assignment, but the final report, and all if its parts, is based on decisions made by the full 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. Are there any activities to participate in outside of the classroom?
6. How do you feel about the sports program? The arts program?
7. 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 Report?
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, salary increases, 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?
11. What are the processes and mechanisms that define the relationship between the Board and the Head of School?
 - a. In recruiting and appointing the Head?
 - b. In supporting the Head?
 - c. In evaluating and determining whether or not, and on what basis, the Head's contract will be continued?

12. What planning does the governing body undertake? Who is responsible for undertaking long-range or strategic planning that addresses program, facilities, finance, and institutional advancement? How is the plan implemented? How is it monitored, and who is responsible?
13. Is there a succession plan for Board Chair and Head of School?
14. Who do you see as the heroes of this school?
15. Have you ever attended an NJAIS Trustee Enrichment Day?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FINANCE OFFICERS, HR OFFICERS, BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS (topics: finance, personnel, and facilities)

1. If the enrollment has decreased, what is the financial plan?
2. Does the school's enrollment contract clearly delineate financial obligations and their due dates?
3. Have there been recent salary and/or benefits freezes or cuts?
4. What is the percentage of tuition remittance in the current budget?
5. Is there a 3-5 year financial plan?
6. Are there alternate sources of revenue?
7. What is the relationship between fundraising and financial management?
8. How is fundraising incorporated into the budget?
9. How is financial aid determined?
10. Please tell us about:
 - a. Financial reserves
 - b. Debt service
 - c. Endowment
 - d. Cash flow from payroll to payroll
11. Please show us your most recent management letter. What is the follow-up on any recommendations in that letter?
12. What was the trend in unrestricted reserves over the last three years, and do you expect that to change in the next two years?

13. What is the value of unrestricted reserves (\$) and what are they as a % of operations?
14. What bonds and, or loans are outstanding? What risks are there that those obligations will not be met?
15. What are the biggest exposures (lawsuits / pending judgments / declining enrollment / regulations / competition / old facilities / security...) the school faces and what plans does the school have to address them?
16. Is there a 3-5 year financial and infrastructure plan that incorporates the above considerations?
17. Does the school's enrollment contract clearly delineate financial obligations and their due dates? Are both parents' signatures required on the contract, and are the contracts enforced effectively? What is the current level of delinquent (past due \geq 90 days) accounts?
18. Describe the various sources of revenue of the organization and their % of operating income?
19. Describe the role of development funds currently and do you see this changing going forward?
20. Have there been recent salary and/or benefits freezes or cuts?
21. What is the percentage of tuition remittance in the current budget?
22. How is financial aid determined and what % of families receive aid? What is the effective net tuition rate (average actual tuition vs. list)?
23. Is there an Investment Committee of the board?
24. Is there a Board Audit Committee, separate from the Finance Committee?
25. How quickly after the fiscal year end were the last two audits completed, and what were the top recommendations?
26. Has there been a capital campaign? Was it successful?
27. How recently have you conducted drills involving local law enforcement? Describe the security response plan. Have there been any unfavorable safety/ security-related events in the last years? Describe your biggest concern in the area of safety and security.
28. Describe the school's policy regarding social media. How recently was this policy updated and how effectively is it monitored?

29. In what form do you track, prioritize and budget infrastructure needs (facilities, technology, vehicles, utility back-up). How recently was the asbestos management plan been updated? Describe the condition of the roofs of the buildings. How often are they assessed?
30. Are there any facility or infrastructure issues that could have a major impact on current operations or reserves?
31. Will the school be able to make payroll for the academic year?
32. What keeps you awake at night?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – ALUMNI

1. What role did you have with the Self-Study Report?
2. What ties alumni to the school?
3. What is important to maintain at the school?
4. What are your great hopes for the future of the school?
5. Who are the heroes of the school?
6. Please talk about communication with alumni.
7. What are your thoughts on alumni leadership at the school?
8. Complete this sentence: Sample School will always be...
9. Complete this sentence: Sample School will never be...

SECTION V

The Visit

“Having a conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change – personal change, community, and organizational change. “

~ Margaret Wheatley

Reviewing On-Site Documents

Provide Visiting Team members the list of on-site documents housed in the Visiting Team Room for their review.

Visiting School Personnel

Provide Visiting Team members 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

Instruct Visiting Team members 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.

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. ****

The Visiting Team will vote on each standard; the NJAIS Accreditation Committee will make a recommendation to the NJAIS Board regarding status of accreditation.

Remarks

Opening Reception

At the opening reception, the Head of School usually makes brief welcoming remarks. He/she then introduces you as the Chair of the Visiting Committee. Be prepared to present brief formal remarks with the following information:

- ✓ the purpose of accreditation.
- ✓ an overview of what to expect during the visit.
- ✓ a statement that the Visiting Team does not evaluate teachers, etc.
- ✓ a timeline of information. The school will not learn of its accreditation status until the NJAIS Board of Trustees meets in January for fall accreditations or June for spring accreditations.

Team members should introduce themselves: name, school name, and title are adequate. References to prior knowledge of the school, relationships with school personnel, etc. **should not** be made.

Sample Remarks at the Opening Reception

Good afternoon. I am honored to be serving as the Chair of the Visiting Team for Sample School. Thank you for the time you have put in over the past months in preparing your Self-Study Report and for being here today.

The purpose of accreditation is to help a school improve itself. The job of the Decennial 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. 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 Report*
- *The NJAIS Standards for Accreditation*

Over the next three-and-a-half days, this group of experienced independent school educators will be viewing your school through the lens of your mission and philosophy, will determine if your Self-Study is an accurate description of what is occurring in the school, and will vote on the NJAIS Standards of Accreditation. The Visiting Team volunteers for this assignment, and while team members are not paid, the personal and professional growth experienced through this process is invaluable. Please know that we are not here to evaluate individual teachers, staff, or administrators, nor are we here as consultants. We have a very busy and intense time ahead of us as we get to know Sample School better. While we will not be evaluating individuals, we look forward to visiting classrooms briefly sometime during our stay.

At the end of our visit, I will report major themes to you in concluding exit remarks. I will not be able to tell you at that juncture if your school will receive accreditation or not. The report that we write has to go to the NJAIS Committee on Accreditation for a recommendation to the NJAIS Board of Trustees, who makes the final determination on accreditation. The School will be notified in February for fall accreditations or

July for spring accreditations.

We are so grateful to you for your warm welcome and we look forward to being part of your community in these next few days. Members of the Visiting Team, please introduce yourselves with your name, school name, and your title at your current school.

Thank you.

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, numbered and 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.

Exit Remarks

Let the Visiting Team know that you, as the Chair, will be issuing the concluding Exit Remarks on the last afternoon of the visit to the school community. As a most important introduction to the report, indicate that there will be no opportunity for questions. We highly recommend that members of the Visiting Team attend this meeting for this closure to the visit.

The audience for Exit Remarks may include those present at the opening reception or such others as the school determines. This is usually faculty, staff, administrators, and some members of the Board of Trustees.

Some things to mention in concluding remarks include:

- Discuss briefly the evaluation process, stressing the value of the Self-Study components, the goal of school improvement, and note any changes already made during the preparation of the Self-Study Report.

- Thank the school staff and faculty for their openness, friendliness, and help.
- Make general remarks about some of the commendations and recommendations from the major areas.
- Indicate that many more specifics will follow in the Visiting Team's Report.
- The evaluation process is not a pass-fail situation.
- Indicate that this is one step in a continuing process designed to make the school even better.
- Thank all for the hospitality and care of the physical needs of the Visiting Team.

The Chair and all Visiting Team members should leave promptly at the conclusion of the Concluding Exit Remarks.

Sample Exit Remarks

Members of the Sample School Community:

First, on behalf of NJAIS, I would like to extend our thanks for your hospitality and welcoming attitude. You made each of us feel welcomed, and it was wonderful to be a part of this campus for the past few days. You let us observe your teaching, answered our questions, and shared your students with us in an atmosphere of respect and thoughtfulness.

What I am about to report is only a summary of the highlights that you will find in the final report. That report will speak to all of the areas you reported on in your Self-Study. I am not allowed to take questions at the conclusion of the remarks, and I remind you that it is the Committee on Accreditation and the Board of NJAIS that will make the final decisions on accreditation, after we submit our report to them.

Over the past three-and-a-half days we have come to learn much about Sample School's developments during the past decade. The school has consolidated its campus, built a Lower School, a new gym, and renovated almost everything else, or so it seemed to us. During this time, the school also grew in enrollment, while shifting its reputation. Sample School increased its focus on the academic arena, but was careful to keep its heart warm, its caring consistent, the arts engaging, and its atmosphere calm --no easy feat.

The respect and ease among all members of the community is palpable, an asset to nurture and cherish in these unpredictable times. There is no doubt that Trustees, faculty members, students, and staff unselfishly pull for what is best for Sample School. There is a level of thoughtful commitment to

“the greater good” that truly permeates the beautiful and, at this time of year, bucolic campus. The Visiting Team remarked frequently on the level of genuine collegiality that is evident among you. The Visiting Team found professionals hard at work: teaching students, managing the business side, raising funds, sustaining the campus, admitting students, and marketing its worth.

The smiles on students’ faces are worth a thousand words of your complete and detailed Self-Study, which we found honest and thorough. In fact, you did well in diagnosing your strengths and prescribing your next steps. Perhaps we have nothing to tell you that you do not already know. But, perhaps, we can lend a hand by framing things in a wider context or giving a higher priority to some items over others.

As you have both consolidated and grown in enrollment, it seems to us that you have also fragmented. Your separate buildings appear to reflect the separateness of your curricula; this is something you know and something you know you have to do something about. While movement from one division to the next always entails a few bumps of one sort or another, we suggest a few “men at work” signs indicating a powerful effort to fill the rifts of reconstruction in all disciplines between divisions and within divisions when indicated, deserves a clear administrative mandate.

*Parallel to this curricular construction, we encourage you to continue your work on refining a system of faculty evaluation tied to setting goals and professional development. While we all know that evaluation and review take place on an informal basis many times over the course of a day, a more formal system helps to ensure that **all** faculty members grow and gain knowledge of new strategies of instruction, which in turn infuses energy and a sense of adventure into the programs of the school. As this system develops over time, we suggest that issues of compensation and distribution of teaching loads and duties also be examined.*

The recent buildings and renovations have clearly had an exceptional impact on Sample School, providing much needed space designed for the programs they house. We look forward to the new Upper School facility that will include a new library, while wondering what the freed space will be used for. We assume, as many of you do, that the next construction will be a new arts center, providing space equal in quality to the artwork and productions that you now enjoy. Might we hope for the addition of space for an instrumental program as mentioned in your Self-Study? In the midst of all this growth, we suggest that the library needs of the Middle School are not forgotten. As these major projects move forward, we strongly encourage that plans be formulated within the fabric of collegiality that you prize. Collaboration among all those whom these building projects will have an impact on helps to ensure the best possible outcomes. In fact this is true for all aspects of a school, not just major projects.

As Yogi Berra once wisely said, “If you don’t know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else.” We hope this adage will spur you on to a task that you know needs to be addressed. Technology in schools is a complex and ever-emerging aspect of education that touches on all disciplines and at

all grade levels. From KidPix to database searches, from word processing to podcasting, the possibilities are endless and the skills are mandatory for the 21st century.

*In our report, the Visiting Team recommends that Sample School create a strategic technology plan that spans the grades and defines the skills to be mastered, both by students and faculty members. What equipment is needed, be it a laptop or tablet or none of the above, and should we consider adding a Mac platform with its unique capabilities, particularly in digital media, music, and the other arts? These are some of **your** questions, and we feel certain that you can answer them, in order to move to the level of sophistication that an institution such as yours deserves. Might we add that things move pretty quickly in this area and speed is of the essence?*

Another area that begs prompt resolution lies in the World Languages Department. The scope and sequence in the three languages from Kindergarten through Grade 12 is interrupted and awkward. For World Languages to be as effective as possible, all the issues involved need to be addressed.

The process of accreditation is one that fosters school improvement. It is never intended to rate or rank a school or evaluate any faculty member, department, or division within. All schools move and reformat themselves constantly to remain current and excellent. Change can be hard, but change is good and necessary. We keep our core values, we revise our missions, and we modify our programs.

There is no doubt in the view of the Visiting Team that Sample School has the leadership, talent, goodwill, and cooperative enterprise to meet its next challenges with success. You have years of experience and strength behind you, and this will easily carry you forward.

Thank you. On behalf of everyone on the Visiting Team volunteering their time and expertise for NJAIS, we all thank you.

*Chair
NJ AIS Visiting Team*

SECTION VI

Conclusion and Follow-Up

“Service is the outer expression of your
inner values.”

~ Angela Perkey

Additional Required Items

The Chair of the Visiting Team should fill out an evaluation form on each team member and submit this to the Director of Accreditation. Assign a team member to collect all of the evaluations about you as a Chair. These will be placed in a self-addressed, stamped envelope and sent directly to NJAIS, or the Director of Accreditation, if on site, will collect them on the last day of the visit.

Post-Visit and Follow-up

A draft copy of the report should be submitted to members of the Visiting Team within 10 days to two weeks of the conclusion of the visit. Generally, the report is about 40-60 pages.

A copy of the draft should be sent to the NJAIS Director of Accreditation after the Visiting Team has a chance to review the draft. After the NJAIS Executive Director has also reviewed the report, the NJAIS Director of Accreditation will discuss the report with the Accreditation Chair.

NJAIS will send the draft report to the Head of School to check facts, for any areas of sensitivity, and for due process. This review is for the “Head’s eyes only” and is still considered a draft to be reviewed and further edited by the NJAIS Accreditation Committee.

Gratitude to Visiting Team Members

As an expression of appreciation, the Director of Accreditation also sends a thank you note to each member of the Visiting Team along with an NJAIS certificate signed by the NJAIS Executive Director and Director of Accreditation. We recommend that Team Members place this certificate in their personnel folders.

SECTION VII

Policies

“When your values are clear to you,
making decisions becomes easier.”

~ Roy Disney

NJAIS Publicity Policy

It is the policy of NJAIS that the Report of the Visiting Team and other subsequent reports and letters be treated as privileged documents. The Accreditation Committee recognizes, however, that every Head of School wants and needs to report to its community the outcome of the accreditation visit. Until the NJAIS Board of Trustees has met and voted on the accreditation status, most comments a Head can communicate shortly after the visit will be very limited; otherwise they may be premature and inappropriate. Thus, until the formal letter from the NJAIS Executive Director is received by a school, the Head of School's comments should be limited to:

“Sample School hosted the Visiting Team from NJAIS for its Decennial Accreditation visit. Our school should learn of its official accreditation status after the NJAIS Board of Trustees has met in January (or June). In the meantime, the work that this entire community put into preparing our Self-Study has poised us for continued improvement and growth. In the concluding oral remarks, the Chair of the Visiting Committee commented, ‘_____.’” Since this was a public statement, it is acceptable to include a short quote from that address in this context.

Team member names should not be included in any remarks. The reports and covering letters may be used in their entirety for circulation to members of the school community as determined by the administration. The school may publish each and every one of the commendations and recommendations; the school may publish the summary and major commendations and recommendations. It is not acceptable to paraphrase from the Visiting Team Report for purposes of publicity or public relations. If there is any question about the appropriate use of the report, the NJAIS Executive Director should be consulted.

Appropriate Uses of the Accreditation Process

The evaluation process utilized by NJAIS is not a substitute for each school's own internal evaluation of itself and its effectiveness, which should continue on an ongoing basis. For that reason, among others, the Accreditation Visiting Team Report may not, under any circumstances, be used by the school directly or indirectly, in the evaluation of the performance of any employee of the school or in any employment-related decision. The charge of the Visiting Team was to determine the actual situation, as it existed in the School, its program and its procedures, and not to pass judgment on the professional personnel involved. Hence, this report is as objective a description as possible of circumstances as they appeared to trained and experienced educators. Any use of this report as an official assessment of a staff person's professional competency would be in violation of the professional ethics under which a school's evaluation is conducted.

The members of the Visiting Team voluntarily reflected their professional judgment in arriving at the conclusions reported in these documents. They are willing to support the thoughtful evaluations which they have made, provided these reports are used appropriately. They are not to be held accountable for an injudicious or unauthorized use of these

documents. Accreditation by NJAIS or the Visiting Team Report should not be relied upon by current or prospective parents and students of a particular school, as a basis for approving of, or criticizing that school. Such use of the evaluation process and the report would be inconsistent with the purpose of the evaluation process and unauthorized by NJAIS.

Use of Logo and Statement

Once a school has received the official letter from the NJAIS Executive Director regarding accreditation status, it is appropriate to indicate on a school's website or in other materials, "Accredited by the New Jersey Association of Independent Schools." The NJAIS logo is also available for posting with this statement.



NJAIS Accreditation Appeals Process

Given that NJAIS member schools are strong organizations, staffed by seasoned professionals committed to quality work and ongoing institutional improvement, the accreditation process is generally felt to be a positive, supportive, encouraging, productive, and even invigorating experience.

That being said, on occasion the Visiting Team's findings as published in the Decennial or Five-Year Report, along with subsequent action by the NJAIS Accreditation Committee and the full NJAIS Board of Trustees, may lead to an adverse change in the school's accreditation status. NJAIS member schools are accorded the right to appeal such decisions. To do so, within 60 days of receipt of written notification of an adverse decision the school must submit to the NJAIS Executive Director a written appeal that includes the following:

- the exact decision being appealed;
- the reasons why the school believes the decision to be in error; and
- evidence supporting the school's position.

When a decision by the NJAIS Board is appealed, the NJAIS Executive Director will ensure that all written communication from the school is received by both the NJAIS Accreditation Committee and the full NJAIS Board of Trustees. The school's prior accreditation and membership status will remain in effect until a final decision is reached.

The NJAIS Board of Trustees will consider appeals relating to the recommendations of the NJAIS Accreditation Committee or to its own decisions that have adversely affected a school's accreditation status. In considering the appeal, the NJAIS Board of Trustees may consider the following, along with any other information it considers pertinent:

- the Self-Study and Visiting Team Reports;
- the notes of the relevant NJAIS Accreditation Committee meetings;
- the written appeal and all supporting materials provided by the school;
- statements by the Chairs of the Visiting Team and Accreditation Committee;
- an oral presentation by the Head of School or one member of the school's Board of Trustees, if the NJAIS Board deems this appropriate;
- any other information the NJAIS Board may regard as relevant.

Should the NJAIS Board affirm the Accreditation Committee's adverse recommendation, it may a) designate the school a provisional member; b) suspend or terminate the school's accreditation; c) extend the school's accreditation period, with or without conditions; d) take any other action it may deem appropriate that is consistent with the Bylaws of the NJAIS Board of Trustees.

It should be noted that schools receive full accreditation status only when *all* NJAIS Standards of Accreditation are met. This is based on a mandate from ICAISA (formerly known as the NAIS Commission on Accreditation).

The decision of the NJAIS Board of Trustees is final and binding.

Complaints Against Accredited Schools

Independent schools accredited by the New Jersey Association of Independent Schools are expected to operate in the public interest and in accordance with recognized ethical and legal practices.

In this regard, NJAIS occasionally receives requests to investigate member schools' alleged injustices to individuals and/or families.

By its nature, NJAIS does not intervene on behalf of any individual or family in issues or disputes that they may have with a school. NJAIS serves its schools by assisting them with their own improvement through a rigorous accreditation process. Since independent schools are entities that govern themselves, accredited schools are expected to have processes for addressing the concerns of individuals and families. If someone reports an issue regarding a member school to the attention of NJAIS, the Executive Director will direct the reporting individual to utilize the school's process of addressing concerns.

If a complaint is brought to the attention of NJAIS that could have an impact on a school's accreditation status, the Executive Director and/or the NJAIS Accreditation Committee will take such action with respect to the issue as they deem appropriate. In such a situation, the goal of NJAIS is to ensure that its member schools maintain compliance with the Association's standards. Only substantially supported allegations of practices that could seriously impair the quality and effectiveness of the school's program and are in conflict with the NJAIS Standards for Accreditation can be considered by the NJAIS Accreditation Committee. The Association and Accreditation Committee will not consider anonymous complaints or complaints that are not made in writing. Should there be a recommendation for a change in a school's status with NJAIS, the school has available the appeals procedure established and published by the Association. This policy creates no rights or duties in favor of individuals or families with respect to NJAIS or its member schools

Any investigation undertaken by NJAIS or its Accreditation Committee as the result of a written report or complaint shall be confidential. The decision whether to notify an individual or family or make any public comment concerning the status of a member school or any other issue considered by NJAIS or the Accreditation Committee shall be within the discretion of the Executive Director.

SECTION VIII

Appendices

“Teaching is the greatest act of optimism.”

~ Colleen Wilcox

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, Inclusion, and Belonging

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.

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

Sample Program Sub-Committee Report – Science

(additional team reports are also available)

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 philosophy 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.

The science department is small (two teachers), so sharing ideas and materials is essential. 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.
- review assessment tools used in the lower grades.

Forms

“When you build bridges, you can keep crossing them.”

~ Rick Pitino



NJAIS EXPENSE VOUCHER

Visiting Team Member's Expenses:

Mileage: _____ miles @ current IRS mileage reimbursement 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.



VISITING TEAM MEMBER EVALUATION FORM

Visiting Team Member _____

Dates of Visit _____

Team member's school: _____

School Accredited: _____

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 _____



NJAIS ACCREDITATION CHAIR EVALUATION FORM

Chair _____ Dates of Visit: _____

School Accredited: _____

Please rate the performance of the Accreditation Team 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
- _____ 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 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, viewbook, 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!



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
NJ AIS prior to reading the Self-Study.

Thank you.

Email to: lcampisi@njais.org

SECTION IX

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 Accreditation Chair receives a letter from a former faculty member who offers to meet with the Chair and other members of the Visiting Team to expose the fact that the school is “suffering from a great imbalance between the academic program and the non-academic activities for students, such as the ever-growing community service program.” She also adds, “You will not hear about this unless you ask. I can tell you who to talk to.” She offers to meet at the hotel and has said that she will call the hotel “so that we can arrange a time.”
 - What is your response?
 - Do you meet with her? Do you tell the Visiting Team? Do you tell the Head of School?
 - What other actions should you consider?

3. 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 opening 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?

4. 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?
5. After what you have thought was a good first day of interviews and class visits, the Head of School comes to you late in the afternoon to report that she has heard four separate reports about one of the Visiting Team members. People have said that his interviewing style is more like an interrogation. 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. You have run this by the Vice-Chair and she has heard some of the same talk.
 - What do you do?
6. It is Tuesday evening, and the 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*.