



SCHOOL ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

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AISNE MISSION STATEMENT

With an enduring commitment to equity and inclusion, AISNE harnesses the collective power of its members to support and strengthen New England independent schools.

AISNE STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

AISNE represents many different types of schools. In the context of the missions and values of our schools, AISNE seeks to encourage an environment in which all members of the community are valued, included and feel an authentic sense of belonging. We believe that cultivating diversity is an essential part of an effective learning environment.

For AISNE, diversity is an umbrella term that includes race, gender, age, ethnicity, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, social and economic class, physical and learning differences, and religion, as well as other characteristics that contribute to each individual's full identity.

We acknowledge and value the tensions and conflicts all schools experience as they work to become truly inclusive institutions, recognizing that progress comes from embracing, not avoiding, this important struggle.

We Believe...

- Schools have an obligation to prepare students to thrive in a diverse world and to develop in them the capacity to encounter difference with openness, empathy, and humility.
- The diversity of identities within our school communities enhances educational experiences, builds citizenship, and strengthens society.
- Transformative school communities are ones where all members feel a deep sense of welcome and belonging and have the opportunity to engage their full potential.
- Cultivating cultural competence in school communities, particularly in school leadership and governance bodies, and creating spaces where community members can practice strengthening those skills are essential to the work of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging.
- In the power of courageous dialogue and in the power of the collective network to support and compel each member school to be a learning community for all of its constituents.
- Our schools, no matter where they are in the work, can evolve their teaching and learning practices to meet the opportunities and demands of the future.
- Collaborative leadership among AISNE schools – demonstrated through the sharing of experiences and best practices – can positively shape the future of education.

Values in Action

AISNE's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our schools comes in many forms across our portfolio of programs and services. Some recent examples of our work:

- *Leadership cohorts and programs for current and aspiring leaders of color in our member schools.*
- *Partnership with local and national organizations that advance diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in independent school education.*
- *Support for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging practitioners in schools.*
- *Robust diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging indicators woven throughout AISNE accreditation standards.*
- *Student-oriented events that support current students of color in independent schools.*
- *Timely and relevant professional development that addresses the challenges and amplifies the opportunities that arise out of the work of creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive school communities that engender an authentic sense of belonging.*

I. THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The task that you are about to undertake is an enormously important one—to your school community, to AISNE, and to the strong tradition of independent education in New England.



For more than 50 years the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE) has been accrediting its member elementary and middle schools. **AISNE’s accreditation process is a vital service to independent schools across New England for several reasons:**

1. The two-step process of self-study followed by the peer review onsite visit provides a **framework for self-identification and external affirmation of the school’s strengths and opportunities for improvement** within the context of each school’s unique mission.
2. The AISNE accreditation process provides an independent and responsive evaluation that results in **recommendations to guide the school’s continuous improvement** that are aligned with the school’s unique mission and culture.
3. This evaluative process affirms that AISNE-accredited schools adhere to **rigorous Standards for best practices in all aspects of independent school operations**, which brings credibility to the individual school, and to AISNE and all its members.
4. The ultimate outcome of this process is ongoing **school improvement and the enhancement of student learning**.

Benefits of Accreditation

There are numerous **benefits of AISNE accreditation**—both internal and external—to schools. The accreditation process:

- Strengthens the school's commitment and congruence to its mission;
- Requires institutional reflection and self-evaluation;
- Affirms the strengths of the school;
- Helps the school identify areas for improvement;
- Provides structure and a timetable for institutional reflection, dialogue, and change;
- Requires the school to compare its performance to a wide range of standards of good practice;
- Demonstrates the school's willingness to be held professionally accountable;
- Enhances the school's credibility with its immediate constituents and with the community at large;
- Demonstrates that the school is part of the larger entity of independent school education;
- Focuses on the institution rather than on individuals which helps to ensure the long-term health of the school.

Eligibility Criteria

All candidates for AISNE accreditation and AISNE-accredited schools must comply with these Eligibility Criteria at all times in order to achieve and maintain their accreditation.

The School:

1. Has a clear statement of mission and philosophy.
2. Serves one or more grades within the elementary, middle, and / or high school divisions. (Grades 1 – Post-Graduate)
3. Is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization as attested by federal and state records.
4. Has a non-discrimination statement as required by law.
5. Is governed by an appropriately constituted and substantially independent governing board, in accordance with the by-laws of the corporation.
6. Has policies and procedures to ensure that any perceived or actual conflicts of interest for board members are disclosed and managed appropriately.
7. Has an annual audit of the school's financial statements, performed by an independent certified public accountant.
8. Has a process for the ongoing monitoring of its compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.

The People who Support AISNE Accreditation

The accreditation process involves a number of parties, each of whom plays an important role in supporting the school's successful accreditation by AISNE.



Accreditation attests to the quality of **The School** by first applying the viewpoint of the school's unique mission and culture to a critical analysis of all aspects of the school. Through an inclusive, community-wide process of self-study, the school engages in thoughtful self-evaluation and goal setting.

The Visiting Team assesses the school through the lens of its own mission and affirms its alignment with AISNE's Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation. The visiting team is composed of accredited school peer volunteers who spend 3 days on campus reviewing materials the school has prepared, observing in classrooms, conducting interviews with stakeholders, reviewing documentation, and composing a visiting team report that provides commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school's continuous improvement.

The AISNE Board of Directors has delegated implementation and stewardship of the accreditation process to **AISNE's Membership Committee**. The Membership Committee consists of volunteer Heads of AISNE-accredited schools who manage the school accreditation process by:

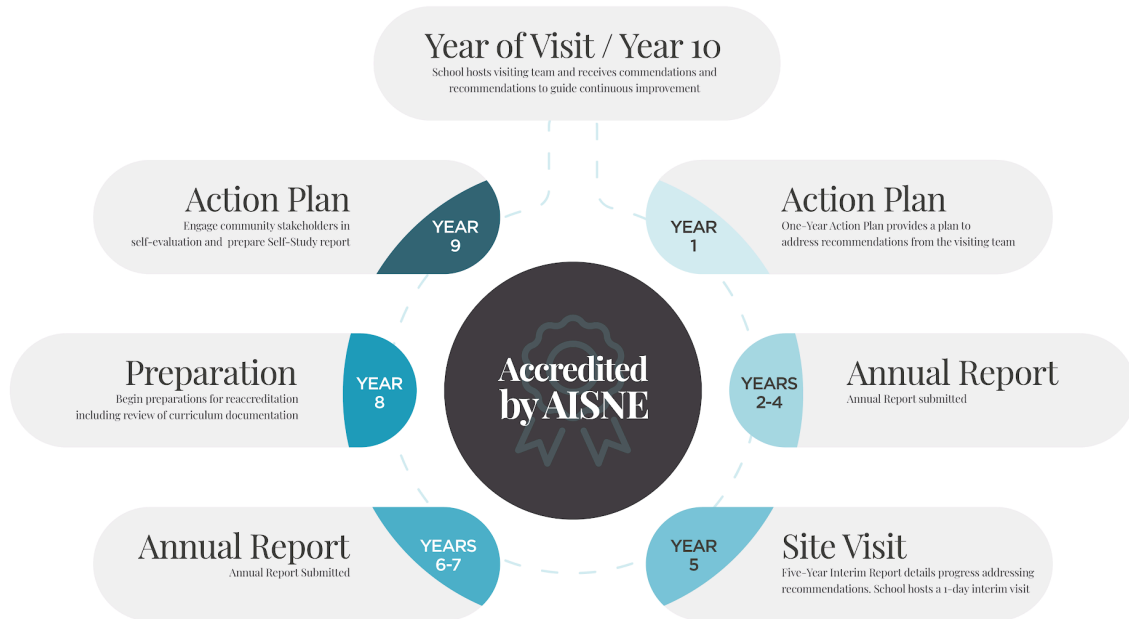
- reviewing visiting team reports from schools that hosted visits for AISNE initial or reaccreditation,
- voting on recommended accreditation decisions,
- reporting those recommendations to the Board, and
- overseeing the efforts of schools not in alignment with AISNE Standards.

The Membership Committee also periodically reviews and revises the accreditation standards and self-study protocol to ensure that they remain current and appropriately responsive to the needs of schools and best practices in independent school operations. The AISNE Director of Accreditation serves as the staff liaison to the Membership Committee and oversees implementation of the accreditation process.

AISNE's Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for school accreditation decisions. The Board determines accreditation decisions for schools based upon recommendations from the Membership Committee.

Timeline and Steps

AISNE accreditation is a cyclical process with full reaccreditation occurring every 10 years.



Initial Accreditation:

Prior to its initial AISNE accreditation, a school must be an AISNE Associate In-Region Member. (This membership category is for non-profit schools that are not accredited by AISNE or NEASC in MA, ME, NH, RI, or VT.) In order to become a candidate for AISNE accreditation, the school must meet all of AISNE’s Eligibility Criteria. After an initial consultation and review of materials affirming compliance with the Eligibility Criteria by the AISNE Director of Accreditation, the AISNE Membership Committee makes a recommendation to the AISNE Board, which votes on the school’s approval as a Candidate for initial AISNE accreditation (this status is called **Recognition of Candidacy**).

During a review of a school’s Accreditation Candidacy Application, the Membership Committee reserves the right to decline the school for accreditation candidacy at its discretion, if the Committee believes the school is not a good match for AISNE’s accreditation program.

There is an expectation that schools in this category host their first site visit for AISNE accreditation within five years of being accepted as a Candidate for initial accreditation. If a school does not receive initial accreditation following its site visit, it is asked to submit a “Corrective Action Plan” within six months and has a total of 3 additional years to successfully complete the initial accreditation process.

Schools already accredited by the Commission on Independent Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) may apply for Full Membership in AISNE. Schools in the process of becoming accredited by NEASC may become Associate In-Region Members of AISNE and must complete the NEASC accreditation process within five years in order to become Full Members.

Reaccreditation:

Schools go through AISNE reaccreditation every 10 years. Working with AISNE, the school establishes a mutually agreed upon date when a Visiting Team will visit the school for 3.5 days for the reaccreditation visit. The school must successfully complete a new Self-Study using the *AISNE School Accreditation Handbook* and demonstrate alignment with the current version of the Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards each time it goes through AISNE reaccreditation.

Cooperative Accreditation:

Schools undergoing initial AISNE accreditation or reaccreditation may decide to seek accreditation from AISNE and from its cooperating partners—the American Montessori Society (AMS) or the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)—simultaneously through a cooperative accreditation. The cooperative accreditation process affirms the school’s alignment with the AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards *and* those of the other accrediting association. The cooperative accreditation process involves the school’s use of the full AISNE Self-Study protocol and a supplement provided by either AMS or AWSNA. In a cooperative accreditation, the onsite visiting team is typically made up of representatives appointed by AISNE and by the cooperating agency, with the Team Chair appointed by AISNE. Both groups of representatives are expected to function as one cohesive team and are responsible for collaborating to verify the self-study report and develop the Visiting Team Report.

A cooperative accreditation agreement between AISNE and the cooperating agency defines and recognizes the commitment each association has to working cooperatively and collaboratively.

Phases of Accreditation

A. Self-Study:

The Self-Study is the heart of accreditation, and the process must be thorough, broad, deep, and inclusive of the entire school community. The Self-Study process involves applying the viewpoint of the school’s unique mission and culture to a critical analysis of all aspects of the school. Through an inclusive, community-wide process, the school engages in thoughtful self-evaluation and goal setting, which includes identifying strengths, opportunities for improvement, and future directions. *A school is expected to take at least one full school year to complete its Self-Study prior to hosting the onsite visit.*

B. The Team Visit, Vote & Report:

The school hosts a 3.5-day visit by a Visiting Team composed of peer volunteers, assembled by the Director of Accreditation.

Based on the Self-Study and the findings during the visit, the visiting team assesses the school's compliance with the AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Standards of Accreditation, and congruence between the school's stated mission and its current program and practices. The team votes on each of the AISNE Standards using the categories: Exemplary, Good, Needs to Improve, and Fail. The team also produces a report commenting on their findings and highlighting commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to guide the school's continuous improvement.

The school is held accountable by AISNE for addressing any recommendations made by the visiting team during its accreditation term.

C. Review Phase & Accreditation Decision:

Once complete, the Director of Accreditation reviews, edits, and formats the Visiting Team Report. The Head of School is provided with a draft of the report and given the opportunity to identify any factual errors prior to the report being finalized.

A Head of School disagreeing with a comment, suggestion, or recommendation made in the Visiting Team report, or with a negative vote on one or more of the Standards for Accreditation, may register those disagreements in writing to the Director of Accreditation. This response must be submitted within three months of receipt of the Visiting Team's report. This response is logged in AISNE's database of record and may be shared with people who have been privy to the report, including the Chair of the Visiting Team, AISNE's Executive Director, Membership Committee, and Board of Directors.

The Membership Committee reviews the Visiting Team Report and the vote sheet indicating the school's compliance with the Accreditation Standards and recommends an accreditation decision to the AISNE Board. There are two possible recommendations:

1. Full Accreditation for a 10-year term (with an interim report and visit in Year 5); or,
2. Provisional accreditation status. (*For information about Provisional Status, see Section IV: Following the Onsite Visit.*)

The AISNE Board votes on the recommended accreditation status, and the Director of Accreditation communicates the Board's decision to the Head of School and Board Chair. Schools receive an AISNE Accredited School Certificate with each successful reaccreditation every ten years.

D. One-Year Action Plan:

In the academic year immediately following the school's site visit, the Head of School sends a written report (*One-Year Action Plan*) to the Director of Accreditation. The *One-Year Action Plan* outlines a plan, including a timeline, to address the Visiting Team's Recommendations. The school is expected to have adequately addressed all of the Recommendations within five years of the onsite visit. Failure to do so may lead to Provisional status.

After reviewing the *One-Year Action Plan*, the Director of Accreditation and a Membership Committee member may conduct a virtual or in-person meeting with the Head of School, focusing on supporting the school's development of a strong plan to address all Recommendations and any areas of concern.

E. Five-Year Interim Visit & Report:

Five years after the site visit, the Head of School sends a *Five-Year School Progress Report* to the Director of Accreditation. This Report details the school's process and progress in addressing the Visiting Team's Recommendations. The school must have adequately addressed each Recommendation in order to remain fully accredited.

A Five-Year Interim Visit is conducted by the Director of Accreditation, a Membership Committee member, and / or the Chair of the original Visiting Team to review progress on all Recommendations and to assess the state of the school more broadly. This visit includes conversations with the Head of School, the Board Chair, and any other staff as requested by the Review Team members; typically this visit includes meetings with representative members of the faculty, staff, administration, and Board.

AISNE's Membership Committee reviews a summary report of the interim visit by the Interim Visit Team and votes to continue the school's current accreditation for the remainder of the 10-year accreditation term, or to place the school in Provisional accreditation.

Maintaining AISNE Accreditation:

Once accredited, schools are required to remain in alignment with AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards. Additionally, schools are required to remain a Full Member of AISNE by submitting timely payment of membership dues and completing the Accredited School Annual Report, which provides updates on substantive changes a school may be experiencing. Accredited schools are also required to complete Pulse Points, AISNE's salary and benchmarking survey, annually.

The accreditation status of a school can be assessed and changed at any time for reasons including, but not limited to, non-compliance with any Eligibility Criteria and / or Standards, for failure to submit adequate one-year and five-year interim reports, failure to complete the Accredited School Annual Report, and failure to pay AISNE membership dues.

Accredited schools are also expected to support AISNE's peer-review accreditation process by volunteering members of their faculty / staff to serve on site visiting teams, with Heads of accredited schools serving as Visiting Team Chairs for other accreditation site visits.

Postponing Reaccreditation:

A school can request a one-school-year postponement of the date of its Decennial visit if needed. Heads of School wishing to request a postponement must send a letter to the Membership Committee, via the AISNE Director of Accreditation, outlining the reason(s) for the request. The Membership Committee may grant a postponement for any of the following reasons:

- a. Change in leadership at the Head of School level that would prevent the school from fully engaging in and benefitting from the Self-Study and / or the Decennial visit;
- b. Major changes in the school's physical plant and / or addition of new program level(s);
- c. Other compelling circumstances as determined by the Membership Committee.

Any school requesting a second postponement within the ten-year cycle may be placed into provisional status as of July 1 of the end of the eleventh year, if the Decennial visit has not taken place. The provisional status remains in effect until the successful completion of a Self-Study and site visit before the end of the twelfth year. A school must be scheduled for its site visit in the twelfth year of its ten-year cycle. If a school is unable to host a visit by the end of the twelfth year, the AISNE Membership Committee may recommend to the AISNE Board that the school's accreditation be revoked, and the school would need to initiate the accreditation process from scratch.

Substantive Changes:

While recognizing that change is a necessary component of school growth, change affecting major aspects of a school may make for challenging times. So that AISNE may best support its accredited schools, we ask that schools notify the Director of Accreditation of substantive changes that may be occurring *and* annually complete an Accredited School Annual Report to provide updates and affirm the school's continued alignment with Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards. Substantive changes of note include, but are not limited to:

- A school's name change
- A change in Head of School, or announcement of an upcoming Head of School change
- A change of location or addition of another campus
- A substantial decline in enrollment
- Addition or elimination of program levels
- Substantial faculty and / or administrative staff turnover
- Pending litigation against the School

The Director of Accreditation will review a school's report of substantive change(s) and determine if it warrants notification to the Membership Committee. Substantive changes may

require submission of additional documentation and / or a virtual or in-person visit to the school, at the discretion of the Director of Accreditation and Membership Committee.

II: Writing the AISNE Self-Study Report

General Directions

Accreditation begins with the school reflecting on, assessing, and affirming its practices in relation to its mission. This process of self-evaluation is the heart of the accreditation process. The Self-Study report that is the product of this self-evaluation reflects the school's present state in all areas of operations and charts a course for the future by setting goals for improvement based on a critical analysis of the school's current programs and practices.

The three basic requirements of a school's self-study are that it is:

- a) **Mission-focused** or mission-driven;
- b) **Comprehensive** of all aspects of school life and operations including practices, policies, procedures, and the educational program; and,
- c) **Inclusive** of representatives of all stakeholder groups and of diverse perspectives and identities represented in the school community.

The Self-Study process is more analytical than descriptive. Each of the AISNE Eligibility Criteria and Standards for Accreditation are designed to be used as launching points for discussion, analysis, and an examination of strengths and areas for improvement. Committees and subcommittees should prioritize analysis over mere description and examine and evaluate the congruence between the school's mission and its program, policies, and practices. In each section of the Self-Study, the school must identify strengths, weaknesses, and directions for the future.

The Self-Study should be inclusive of the full community. Creating committees and subcommittees that cross grade, division, department, or administrative office breaks down silos across the organization and promotes understanding of how the school operates within the community. Importantly, it also provides opportunities to welcome input that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and identities, and brings a broad, school-wide perspective to the report.

The audience for the Self-Study is three-fold:

- a) The school's own stakeholders
- b) Visiting Team members
- c) AISNE's Membership Committee

The Self-Study report itself should reflect honesty, transparency, and forthrightness in painting a picture of the current state of school programs and operations, and should represent the broad consensus of the community in its self-evaluation.

The AISNE Self-Study Template

AISNE provides [a template for completion of the Self-Study](#) that schools should use to complete their report. The template provides the structure—including order of contents, specific questions a school must respond to, and format—for preparation of the Self-Study report. *Please prepare your school's Self-Study report using this structure.* Answer each question with description, analysis and relevant examples or data that can help readers understand how your school meets each of the AISNE Standards for Accreditation, within the context of your unique mission and culture.

We recommend that your school copy the template and create your own working document using a collaborative writing platform so that many members of your community can contribute. The final Self-Study report should be submitted *as one electronic document* (PDF or Google Doc) with a table of contents that contains clickable links or bookmarks for the various sections.

Tips for Writing the Self-Study

- Begin *at least* one full school year in advance of the date of the site visit.
- Select a Self-Study coordinator or co-coordinators to lead and organize the Self-Study process. See *Appendix B - Job Description for self-study Coordinator(s)* for a description of this leadership role. This person should complete AISNE Training and participate in the Self-Study Coordinator cohort.
- Assign each section of the Self-Study to a committee of key and / or interested members of the school community who have the knowledge needed to complete each section accurately (for example, *Standard 2: Governance* questions should be answered by members of the governing board).
- Set a timetable for completion of all sections of the Self-Study—be sure to build in time to bring all committee sections together and edit and revise the report to give it a sense of cohesion and one voice on behalf of the school.
- Consider innovative ways to use technology to support the work of committees and subcommittees and facilitate an efficient process. For example, shared documents allow committee members to contribute to their assigned sections simultaneously and enable Self-Study coordinators to monitor the progress of each committee's work. Online survey tools can be used to streamline the process for collecting and analyzing data and gathering stakeholder input.
- Before committee writing begins, create a style guide that includes common terms (such as names of divisions and departments), instructions for formatting, and other stylistic and editorial instructions that all committees will use. This will support consistency across sections of the report and make for an easier job editing the report at the end.
- Respond to all the questions under each Standard with both descriptions of the school's current program and practices and constructive analysis.
- Write a report that is succinct but sufficiently descriptive so as to paint a picture of what makes your school unique.

- Submit the Self-Study to the AISNE office electronically **at least 6-8 weeks before the scheduled visit**. The Director of Accreditation will distribute the report to visiting team members.

Preparing your Curriculum Documentation

AISNE's school accreditation program looks at all aspects of a school's programs, policies, and practices, including its educational program. Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life requires that "The school provides a mission-driven educational program that promotes student learning and growth." Indicator 1 states, "The school has a systematic and inclusive process by which faculty regularly document, review, evaluate, and revise the educational program."

To inform and complement the school's Self-Study (and, in particular, the Student Experience / Program section), documentation articulating the school's curriculum should be prepared and / or updated *the year prior* to the Self-Study year if this is not done on an ongoing / annual basis. (This is typically Year 8 of the 10-Year accreditation cycle.) This will allow the school to reflect on both the content of its curriculum and the process of curriculum evaluation - including identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement - as it completes the Self-Study.

Documenting, evaluating, and revising the school's curriculum to align with its mission and meet goals for student learning outcomes is expected to be ongoing work for all schools. To prepare for the upcoming Self-Study process and the site visit, your school should ensure that its curriculum documentation is up-to-date and includes the following:

- Articulation of the vision for and overall goals of the educational program, based on the school's mission
- Vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum scope and sequence for all departments across grades and divisions
- Methodology for assessing student progress through the program (both formative and summative)
- Evidence that the educational program promotes intellectual inquiry and critical thinking, draws from a wide variety of perspectives, and reflects the school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The curriculum documentation should present a thoughtful and deliberate progression that is based on research, best practices, subject knowledge, and assessment. The documentation should indicate the appropriate intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and ethical development of students in all aspects of school and student life, as appropriate to the school's unique mission and culture. For schools with an online component, course content, platform(s), goals, and the school's methods for measuring its success should be described.

Curriculum documentation should be designed to provide an understanding of the school's educational program by someone outside of the school community. Schools may organize this documentation digitally using the method most appropriate for the school and make it accessible to the accreditation Visiting Team. Examples of typical types of documentation provided include: faculty-developed scope & sequence documents and/or unit plans for individual courses, links to commercial curricula programs used by the school, departmental maps or course plans, grade level rubrics, portrait-of-a-graduate documentation, etc.

III. The Onsite Visit

Budgeting for AISNE Accreditation

It is a priority for AISNE that accreditation remains accessible for the wide diversity of schools that we serve. We strive to make accreditation an affordable service, while ensuring that it is a rigorous process of peer review through which all aspects of the school are evaluated. Total expenses for AISNE accreditation can vary widely depending upon the size of your school and will include a) the annual cost of your school's AISNE membership dues, b) an annual accreditation fee, and c) the costs associated with the AISNE Self-Study and site visit (which occur every 10 years).

When planning for costs associated with the Self-Study and decennial site visit, the school should anticipate allocating funds for special compensation and / or reduction or alteration of workload for those responsible for coordinating the school's Self-Study.

The school is also responsible for the costs of travel, lodging, and meals for the Visiting Team for the duration of the visit. These expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Mileage reimbursement at the IRS rate for travel to and from home, hotel, and the school
- Hotel accommodations (with private bedroom and bathroom) for each team member for three nights
- Hotel workroom for the team to use for the duration of the visit (from noon on the arrival day through 5:00 p.m. on the last day)
- Meals and snacks for the Visiting Team for the duration of the visit
- Cost of a reception or welcome event for the Visiting Team on the first day of the visit

Much of the total cost of the onsite visit portion of accreditation will depend on the size of your Visiting Team (typically 5-8 people). When planning the visit, we encourage you to make economical choices - the team isn't expecting anything extravagant!

The following worksheet can be used to help plan ahead:

Category	Type of Expense	Anticipated Amount
Dues & Fees:	Annual AISNE membership dues	<i>Dues & fees vary based on school size and operating budget. Contact the Director of Accreditation for help estimating your annual dues.</i>
	Annual accreditation fee	
Staff:	Special compensation for Self-Study Coordinator(s), Editor (if needed)	
Site visit:	Welcome reception	
	Lodging (individual rooms) # Committee members x 3 nights	
	Conference room (at hotel and on campus for 3.5 days)	
	Meals/snacks (at hotel and on campus for 3.5 days)	
	Transportation for each visiting team member (typically mileage reimbursement at federal reimbursement rate)	

Guidelines for Preparing for the Site Visit

A. HOSPITALITY

Your school has just completed a very thorough Self-Study report, all of your community stakeholders have been engaged in the process of self-evaluation, and your school is preparing to welcome a Visiting Team of peers from other accredited schools to verify the school's findings. Preparation for the site visit will assure the success of your school's experience and enable the work of the onsite visiting team. A very important aspect of this preparation is hospitality. The school will provide for lodging, meals, and transportation for the team. These arrangements should be made with the input of the Visiting Team Chair.

Lodging: The school should identify a local hotel within convenient driving distance of the school and reserve accommodations for all visiting team members. It can be helpful for the hotel to have a restaurant (or coffee and continental breakfast available) onsite and restaurant options nearby so that the team has quick and convenient options for meals during their stay.

Workspaces: The visiting team should have access to a private conference room both at the school and at the hotel; these workrooms will be the team's homebase during the visit for team meetings, document review, and writing. At the hotel, we recommend reserving the workroom

from noon on the day of arrival through 5pm on the last day of the visit. Both workrooms should be stocked with snacks and other supplies for the team (see below for comprehensive list).

Meals: As noted above, it is helpful to identify a hotel with easy access to food options whenever possible. Generally the school makes reservations for the team to have dinner together on the first night of the visit, and arranges for lunches to be delivered when the team is on campus. For dinners on the 2nd and 3rd nights, as well as for lunch on the 4th day, the team will typically order meals to be delivered to the hotel workroom. It is helpful for the school to provide menus and offer to help coordinate the ordering, payment, and delivery of these meals.

Support: During the site visit, the school should designate one contact person for the team's support. This person will be responsible for things like securing any missing supplies, helping the team find documents, making sure meetings and interviews start and end on time, and introducing team members to staff, families, and students as appropriate.

B. SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

The visiting team will be on campus for 3.5 days and will spend three nights in a hotel within close commuting distance of the school. AISNE visits are held either Sunday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Friday, based on the school's preferred dates and the availability of team members and AISNE staff.

The school, in consultation with the visiting team chair, will develop the schedule for the site visit. As you prepare for the Visiting Team's time on your campus, you should anticipate that the team will split its time between meetings with focus groups or individual stakeholders, observing classes and school life, and reviewing the documentation you have provided or meeting to reflect on, discuss, and synthesize what they have learned.

All school employees should be onsite for the duration of the visit and should be available to talk with a member of the visiting team. A master checklist of employees and job titles (including photos if possible) should be provided to the visiting team so they can make sure they have interacted with as many members of the campus community as possible.

A sample 4-day overview is provided on the next page, followed by a day-by-day breakdown. Please note that these are only examples of typical structures, and all aspects of the schedule may be adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of your school community and to fit in with your existing structures and constraints.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Time on Campus	2-5pm	~7:30am - ~4:00pm	~7:30am - ~4:00pm	Team Chair returns to campus between 1:00-3:00pm.
Suggested activities	Campus Tour Welcome Reception Suggested Initial Focus Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission (representatives from a range of stakeholder groups) • Board of Trustees • Families 	Team Meeting HOS/Team Chair Check-in Observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival • Classroom teaching • Special events/assemblies • Faculty/admin meetings • Dismissal • Extended Day Suggested Focus Groups (spread over both days): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty • Academic Leadership • Senior Admin Team • Self-Study Team • Finance Team • Facilities Team • Development Team • Admissions/ Enrollment Team • Community Outreach • Board of Trustees (selected Committees) Lunch with students		Team Meeting & Work Time throughout morning and early afternoon (in hotel workspace). AISNE Director of Accreditation at hotel with team to support report-writing.
Team Work Times	Working dinner at restaurant	Evening working sessions, ~5:30pm-10pm. Dinner delivered to hotel workspace.		

C. DAY-BY-DAY PLANNING

Day 1: Team Arrival, Campus Reception & Initial Focus Groups

On this day, the team will travel to the designated hotel from their homes, settle in, and have an initial team meeting at the hotel. They will then proceed to the school for a kick-off meeting with the Head of School, a tour of campus, and a welcome reception. Generally this day also includes 2-3 additional focus groups while on campus, followed by the Visiting Team’s initial team dinner at a local restaurant.

Of note, the design of the welcome reception is entirely up to you, based on what is appropriate and authentic for your school. The decision of who is invited to attend the welcome reception is made at the school’s discretion, as is how formal or informal this event is. These decisions should be communicated to the Visiting Team Chair in advance for the team’s planning

purposes. The welcome reception is an opportunity for the Head of School to give a warm welcome and introduce the Visiting Team to key members of the community, and also often includes a brief statement by the Visiting Team Chair.

Day 2: Team on Campus for Evidence-Gathering Activities

On this day, the team generally arrives early to observe student arrival, followed by some team meeting time in their private space. From there, the team scatters. Usually the Team Chair will start the day with a private 1:1 meeting with the Head of School, while other team members conduct focus groups and observations. Time should also be built into the day for the Visiting Team to meet and debrief privately, to hold 1:1 conversations with key stakeholders, and for flex time when the team can follow-up on questions that arise during the morning. Often schools choose to schedule Family Focus Groups after school on this day, if this has not taken place the previous day. An afternoon check-in between the Team Chair and the Head of School is helpful to schedule before the team departs.

The Visiting Team generally departs campus around 4pm, and begins their evening work over dinner (delivered to the hotel) in the hotel workspace from around 5:30pm until 10pm. The Head of School should be on the lookout this evening for communications from the Team Chair requesting documents or follow-up meetings for Day 3.

Day 3: Team on Campus for Evidence-Gathering Activities

This will be the Visiting Team's final full day on campus. The day is structured much like Day 2, with a morning check-in with the Head of School, observations, and focus groups. More time should be devoted to "flex" scheduling, to enable the team to follow-up on the questions that they generated during their evening work time the previous night. It is helpful to have the CFO or Business Manager available for most of this day, along with several members of the senior leadership team.

Once again, the Visiting Team generally departs campus around 4pm, and begins their evening work over dinner (delivered to the hotel) in the hotel workspace from around 5:30pm until 10pm. It is during this evening meeting that the team officially votes on the school's achievement of the standards and indicators, in preparation for writing up the report.

Day 4: Team Work Time & Team Chair Report-Out

On this day, the team works entirely from the hotel as members work to flesh out the findings in the report and to develop a prioritized set of Commendations and Recommendations. The Director of Accreditation generally joins the group on this day, as a mechanism to ensure quality and consistency across reports and to answer any questions that may arise. Between 1-3pm, the Visiting Team Chair should be scheduled to return to campus for a 1:1 meeting with the Head of School to share a brief verbal report-out on the team's findings, commendations, and recommendations. The Head of School has the option of asking the Visiting Team Chair to give brief remarks to a broader group following the exit report to provide closure to the community at the end of the visit. However, addressing faculty or staff is optional and may not be possible given the school's scheduling constraints.

D. SCHEDULING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS & MEETINGS

One of your first scheduling tasks will be to determine with whom the team should speak, and when they are available.

The Visiting Team will want to meet with the following key stakeholder groups:

- Board Members / Trustees (consider Board committee meetings in addition to or in lieu of a full board meeting)
- Academic Leadership Team
- Administrative Leadership Team
- Faculty: the team will meet with classroom teachers either individually or in groups who are not also part of another group. You should schedule multiple faculty groups across several days.
- Student Groups: the team may meet with a group(s) of students. Lunchtime with the students tends to be a good time to hear the student perspective.
- Families: The team will want to hear from a representative group of families with diverse perspectives including length of time at the school, families of children in different program levels, current and alumni families, etc.

The Visiting Team will also want to meet with individuals including:

- Head of School (schedule a formal meeting with the Head and Team Chair during the visit, as well as a brief daily check-in)
- Board Chair
- Self-Study Coordinator(s)
- Business Manager / CFO and business office staff
- Facilities staff
- Admissions / enrollment staff
- Advancement staff
- Health / wellness staff (school nurse, counselor, etc.)

An organizer to help you begin thinking through the availability of various individuals and groups is provided on the next page.

Stakeholder (Individual or Group)	Name(s) & Title(s)	Scheduled Meeting Day(s) & Time(s)
Head of School <i>Guidance: schedule a formal meeting with the Head and Team Chair during the visit, as well as a brief daily check-ins</i>		
Board Members / Trustees <i>Guidance: Consider assigning the Visiting Team to meet with Board committees in addition to or in lieu of a full session with all Trustees.</i>		
Board Chair		
Administrative Leadership Team Members		
Academic Leadership Team Members		
Faculty Members <i>Guidance: The team should meet with representative groups of classroom teachers; you may want to schedule these by department, division, or another structure that makes sense for your school.</i>		
Students <i>Guidance: The team should meet with a group (or several groups) of students. Lunchtime with the students tends to be a good time to hear the student perspective.</i>		
Families <i>Guidance: The team should hear from a representative group of families with diverse perspectives, including length of time at the school, experience with different program levels, current and alumni families, etc.</i>		
Self-Study Coordinator(s)		
Business Manager / CFO and business office staff		
Facilities staff		
Admissions / Enrollment staff		

Advancement staff		
Health / Wellness staff (school nurse, counselor, etc.)		
Other <i>Guidance: Schools should feel free to schedule individual meetings or focus groups for specialized staff or faculty, in order to give the Visiting Team maximum exposure to the school. These might include Community Engagement staff, Auxiliary Programs staff, Teaching Fellow Program staff, etc.</i>		

E. SCHEDULING OBSERVATIONS

The team will spend some time in classrooms, though it is helpful to remind your community that it is likely Visiting Team members will pop in for brief (10-15 minute) observations of a representative sample of teachers and will likely not be staying for full lessons nor observing every single teacher in action.

The Visiting Team will determine which teachers it sees, and when, based on conversations in their initial team meeting. The school should not schedule these observations; instead, please simply provide the Team Chair with the contextual information that will enable visitors to select and conduct observations independently.

To best prepare the Visiting Team for observations, please submit the following:

- List of classroom assignments (with teacher, subject, and grade level denoted)
- Daily schedule (For elementary school, please ensure it is clear how each teacher divides up their day, and provide schedules for Specialists like Art, Music, PE, World Languages, Library, etc.)
- List of any special activities not reflected on the daily schedule, but which will be taking place during the visit, with times and locations (i.e. Department Meetings, All School Meeting, Senior Administrative Team Meeting, Faculty Meeting, etc.)

F. SCHEDULING: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once you have identified the appropriate stakeholders for 1:1 and Focus Group meetings, scheduled those meetings across the first three days of the visit, assigned private spaces for those meetings, and collected all the relevant scheduling documentation to enable the team to select and conduct classroom and community observations, you're ready to draft a schedule.

Interested in seeing some samples? Click here ([sample 1](#)) and here ([sample 2](#))

Want a downloadable template? Click [here](#)

G. SUPPLIES AND DOCUMENTATION

In addition to answering the questions required in the [Self-Study Template](#), a school must also provide supplementary materials to the Visiting Team to provide evidence of the school's alignments with the Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards. Digital versions of these documents should be provided to AISNE's Director of Accreditation for dissemination to the Visiting Team. Some of these materials must be provided in advance, whereas others should be provided on-site at the time of the visit, as indicated below. A list of required items is included here and items are also listed after the appropriate section in the self-study template.

Items to be provided by the school electronically to the Director of Accreditation at least 6-8 weeks prior to the onsite visit:

These items should be provided directly to the Director of Accreditation (via email, Dropbox, or Google drive folder):

- **Cover letter from Head of School** outlining overall strengths of the school, areas of challenge, and directions for the future. The cover letter is also an opportunity to identify key themes or areas for inquiry the Head hopes the Visiting Team will be alert to. This letter should also summarize any substantive change(s) (e.g. staffing, programming, etc.) that have occurred since the preparation of the self-study. This letter should also be signed by the President of the Board of Trustees.
- **Self-Study Report** (submitted as *one electronic document* - PDF or Google Doc - with a table of contents that contains clickable links and / or bookmarks for the various sections).
- **Curriculum documentation** for each grade level in each area of learning (if the school maintains their curriculum documentation using an online program, please provide log-in information)
- **Family and / or Student Handbook**
- **Employee Handbook**
- **Annual school calendar**
- **List of all employees** with titles / departments (photographs are also helpful)
- **Admission catalog and related admission materials** given to applicants and their families

Items prepared specifically for the Team Chair, Business Manager on the Visiting Team, and AISNE Office:

- Current **operating budget**
- Most recent **operating statement** (income and expense projections and actuals)
- Most recent long-range financial planning document
- Most recent **audited financial statements and management letter**

Items to be provided digitally and organized by Standard for the Visiting Team:

Each Standard's narrative in the Self-Study should be supplemented by a set of documents and artifacts that the team can review to provide additional context, detail, and supporting evidence. These items should be provided directly to the Director of Accreditation (via email, Dropbox, or Google drive folder) at least 2 weeks prior to the visit.

- Please carefully review [this list of supplementary documents](#) to support your school's self-study.

Supplies for the Visiting Team (to be available in hotel and school work rooms):

- Electric sockets / surge protectors for all team members to charge laptops and other devices
- Internet access
- Supplemental computer equipment organized for easy access, if requested by team chair (e.g., printer, copier, projector)
- Extension cords
- Flip charts and markers
- Masking tape
- Pencils, pens, highlighters
- Pads of paper
- Post-it notes
- Non-alcoholic beverages, water, and snacks
- Organized in a folder for each team member (*typically awaiting team members upon their arrival at the hotel*)
 - Nametag
 - Visit schedule
 - Contact information for the person designated to support the team
 - A short list of nearby restaurants and /or menus, drugstores, etc.
 - Campus map
 - Key cards for access to campus buildings (if necessary)
 - Expense reimbursement form with instructions for submission

A WELL-PREPARED COMMUNITY

The school's Self-Study report is the main tool the visiting team will use to corroborate the school's findings during the site visit. In order to prepare to be interviewed by the visiting team, the school's faculty and staff should be familiar with the whole self-study report, particularly the self-identified strengths, areas for improvement, and directions for the future. Making the Self-Study report available to staff ahead of time - and highlighting key takeaways - will ensure that all staff are familiar with the full contents, not just the section(s) they contributed to.

Members of the visiting team will conduct classroom observations, but the site visit is not intended as an individual personnel evaluation. When the visiting team members observe in classrooms, they hope to see classrooms that demonstrate the school's educational philosophy and consistency across classrooms. They will observe the tone of the classroom, teaching style, and interaction between teacher and students in order to gather information about the school's

overall teaching methodologies, styles, and techniques. The observations are meant to provide a quick snapshot of the curriculum in action. These observations will likely last a few minutes, not the entire period, and it is unlikely that all teachers in the school will be observed.

Every faculty and staff member should expect to interact with the Visiting Team either individually, as part of a group interview, or during a classroom observation. However, not every Visiting Team Member will be able to interact with every school employee due to the enormity of the tasks and responsibilities that need to be completed during the short time available for the site visit.

Most conversations between visiting team members and faculty / staff involve alignment of the school's mission and philosophy with the educational program, and conversations about school community, climate, and culture.

Remember that students and families should also be advised of the site visit and involved as appropriate.

IV. Following the Onsite Visit

Finalizing the Visiting Team Report

Following the site visit, the Head of School will receive a draft version of the Visiting Team Report from the Director of Accreditation and will be invited to conduct a factual review of the report. The Head is asked to read through the Report and comment on any factual errors that may be present. In addition, the Head is asked to indicate if any of the Recommendations require further clarification.

The Report is not to be shared with members of the school community, including trustees, at this time. If a Head must consult with an employee at the school in order to ascertain the accuracy of a statement, that person can be shown the relevant section(s) of the Report, however the draft version of the report in its entirety is not to be distributed.

During the fact check, while there may be a turn of phrase or observation that may not be the way the Head would characterize the situation, the Head is strongly urged to refrain from editing for any other reason than correcting a factual error. The contents of the Report represent the consensus of the Visiting Team based on their conversations, observations, and document review during the onsite visit.

If the Head finds any factual errors in the Report, those may be submitted in writing by email to the Director of Accreditation along with the accurate information needed to correct the error. The Director of Accreditation will then correct the inaccuracy(ies) and send the final version of the Visiting Team Report to the Head of School for their approval.

AISNE Appropriate Use of School Accreditation Process and Visiting Team Report

The AISNE accreditation process is not a substitute for each school's own internal evaluation of itself and its effectiveness, which should be ongoing.

The charge of the Visiting Team is to determine the actual performance of a school in numerous categories as it existed in the school, its program, and its procedures at one moment in time. Hence, the Visiting Team Report is an objective description of circumstances as they appeared to trained and experienced peer educators. Any use of the Visiting Team Report as an official assessment of a school employee's professional competency would violate the professional ethics under which a school's evaluation is conducted. The AISNE 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 members of the Visiting Team voluntarily reflected their professional judgment in arriving at the conclusions reported in the accreditation documents. They are willing to support the

thoughtful evaluations that they have made, provided these documents are used appropriately and in the spirit in which they are intended. However, they are not to be held accountable for an injudicious or unauthorized use of these documents or parts thereof. Accreditation by AISNE or the Visiting Team Report should not be relied upon by current or prospective families and/or students of a particular school as a basis for criticism about the school or about the experience of a particular family and/or student.

As further outlined in [Appendix G](#), the school may publish the commendations and recommendations from the Visiting Team Report; however, it is not acceptable to paraphrase from the Visiting Team Report for purposes of publicity or public relations. Excerpts from the Visiting Team Report may not be used either on the school's website or public media. The Visiting Team Report in its entirety should be shared with the school's board, and may be shared with faculty and staff, families, and other stakeholders at the discretion of the head of school.

Any unauthorized or inappropriate use of the Visiting Team Report may result in sanctions as deemed appropriate by AISNE. If there is any question about the appropriate use of the Visiting Team Report, the AISNE Director of Accreditation should be consulted.

School Review

Once the Visiting Team Report is approved, the school will be placed on the agenda for review at the next available AISNE Membership Committee meeting. The Membership Committee reviews the Visiting Team Report and the vote sheet indicating the team's assessment of the school's alignment with the Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards and recommends an accreditation decision to the AISNE Board. There are three possible recommendations: full accreditation for a 10-year term (with an interim report and visit in Year 5), Provisional accreditation status, or Revocation of Accreditation.

The AISNE Board votes on the recommended accreditation status and the Director of Accreditation communicates the Board's decision to the Head of School and Board Chair. Schools receive an AISNE Accredited School Certificate with each successful reaccreditation every ten years.

Provisional Status

There are five reasons a school may be placed in Provisional accreditation status, all of which are intended to support the school in resolving pertinent issues and remaining an accredited school in good standing with AISNE:

1. **At the time of the decennial visit:** The Visiting Team votes failure on:
 - a. one or more Eligibility Criteria
 - b. one or more Standards
2. **At any time during the accreditation term:** Noncompliance with any Eligibility Criteria or Standards, or failure to meet annual reporting requirements.
3. **At the One-Year and/or Five-Year Marks:** Failure to submit adequate Interim Reports (One-Year Action Plan or Five-Year Follow-Up Report) or inadequate progress addressing the recommendations provided by the previous visiting team.
4. **Upon Submission of the Self-Study:** Inadequate Self-Study or late submission of Self-Study.
5. **Prior to hosting a Visiting Team:** Requesting a second postponement within a Decennial cycle.

Within three months of a Provisional accreditation status notification, the Head of School is asked to submit a **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)**, a detailed written statement outlining how the school will come into compliance as well as a proposed timetable for that action. The school is expected to move into compliance according to a timetable approved by the Membership Committee. The Membership Committee may require status reports at regular intervals in addition to the CAP, and may outline additional requirements for the school based upon the unique context.

Throughout this process, the school works closely with the AISNE office and their Membership Committee Liaison. When the school has made the necessary changes, the Director of Accreditation and one member of the Membership Committee and / or the original Visiting Team Chair may visit the school to verify that the school has resolved the areas of concern. Based on this visit, a recommendation for accreditation, continued Provisional accreditation, or revocation of accreditation is then made through the Membership Committee to the AISNE Board of Directors.

AISNE does not dictate how or if schools must notify their constituents of a Provisional accreditation status. In the event of the loss of accreditation or voluntary withdrawal from AISNE accreditation, it is the school's responsibility to inform its constituents that it is no longer accredited by AISNE and remove any reference to AISNE accreditation from its materials and website.

Appeal Process

As a developmental process of continuous growth and improvement, the feedback offered by the Visiting Team is intended to be formative and supportive of the school's efforts to strengthen its programs, policies, and operations. At times, however, after the completion of the onsite visit and factual review of the Visiting Team Report, a Head of School may seek to formally register a concern about the validity of the Visiting Team's findings or a disagreement with the Visiting Team's judgment. Additionally, AISNE's Membership Committee is charged with overseeing the formal accreditation process for all schools choosing to become recognized by AISNE as accredited institutions. After a thorough process of review, AISNE's Membership Committee recommends an accreditation decision to the AISNE Board of Directors and the Board makes the final determination based on the recommendation of the Committee. At times a Head of School may wish to challenge the accreditation decision of the AISNE Board following the process of School Review conducted by AISNE's Membership Committee. In these instances, a school may follow the steps below.

- 1) In the event that a Head of School disagrees with a comment, Suggestion, or Recommendation made in the Visiting Team report, or with a negative vote on one or more of the Standards for Accreditation, may register those disagreements in writing through a letter to the Director of Accreditation. This response must be submitted within three months of receipt of the Visiting Team's report. This response is logged in AISNE's database of record and may be shared with people who have been privy to the report, including the Chair of the Visiting Team, AISNE's Executive Director, Membership Committee, and Board of Directors.
- 2) In the event that a school disagrees with an accreditation action, the Head of School may contact the Chair of the Membership Committee in writing within 30 days of receipt of the decision via the Director of Accreditation to initiate an appeal. The written appeal should state the grounds of appeal and any supporting evidence. The Director of Accreditation will forward a copy of the appeal to the AISNE Executive Director and the Membership Committee Chair immediately upon receipt of the request. The Chair will bring the appeal to the Committee and review the decision. At that time only, additional clarifying evidence may be submitted by the school to be reviewed and considered by the Committee. In response to the appeal, the Membership Committee will either 1) review the appeal and affirm the original recommendation to AISNE's Board of Directors, or 2) review the appeal and make a new recommendation to the Board.

If after review by the Committee, the original finding stands and the school seeks a further appeal, the Head of School may send its appeal in writing to the Executive Director and the President of the Board of Directors of AISNE. The Board President will appoint a hearing panel consisting of members of the Board of Directors, that includes the Chair of the Membership Committee. The hearing panel will review the appeal insofar as it will seek to establish whether or not the Committee followed all of its policies and procedures and decided the matter in a fair and equitable manner. The final appeal is confined to reviewing the work of the Committee to ensure Committee procedures were followed and that the decision appears to be fair and unbiased based on the facts at hand. The hearing panel will report its findings to the full AISNE Board of Directors,

the members of the Membership Committee, and the school. In response to the appeal, the hearing panel will either 1) review the appeal and recommend that the Board affirm its earlier decision or 2) review the appeal and recommend that the Board make a different decision regarding the school's accreditation status. A ruling by the AISNE Board of Directors hearing panel on an appeal shall be final and binding on all parties.

School Complaint Procedure

AISNE has a policy in place for handling complaints about its member schools and its accredited schools:

The Association of Independent Schools in New England (“AISNE”) expects that the independent schools it accredits operate in the public interest and in accordance with [AISNE's School Accreditation Eligibility Criteria, Standards, and Indicators](#) (the “Criteria and Standards”), and applicable federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements. In this regard, AISNE may receive grievances from community members regarding an accredited school's actions or conduct.

AISNE does not intervene on behalf of any individual or family in issues or disputes that they may have with an accredited school. AISNE serves its schools by assisting them with their own continuous improvement through rigorous accreditation and reaccreditation processes. Since independent schools are entities that govern themselves, AISNE-accredited schools are expected to have processes for addressing the concerns of individuals and families they serve. If someone reports an issue regarding a member school to AISNE—regardless of whether that member school is accredited by AISNE—the Executive Director or Director of Accreditation will encourage the individual to pursue the issue directly with appropriate school personnel utilizing the school's articulated process of addressing concerns. In the event that a reporting party has instituted litigation against an accredited school, AISNE will not take any action while the matter is being litigated.

AISNE will generally forward and may discuss complaints, whether written or oral, that it receives about any member school to the head of that school (or chair of the school's board of trustees if the concern involves the head of school). AISNE may also report the complaint to local authorities, if required under applicable law. When pursuing these complaints, AISNE is not acting on behalf of the individual that raised the complaint, but rather forwarding information received to the involved AISNE member school.

If AISNE receives a complaint about a candidate for accreditation or an AISNE-accredited school, it may decide to review such matter if the information, if true, could lead to a loss of accreditation (or a failure of a candidate school to receive accreditation). In such a situation, AISNE's goal is to ensure that its accredited school maintains compliance with the Criteria and Standards. AISNE will therefore only review allegations of practices or conduct that AISNE deems, in its sole discretion, seriously impact the quality and effectiveness of the school's program and are in conflict with the Criteria and Standards.

AISNE expects individuals not to make anonymous complaints. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous complaint can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously and action will generally not be taken against an accredited school solely on the basis of an anonymous report. AISNE also expects that individuals provide complaints in writing so as to ensure AISNE adequately understands the nature of the concerning action or conduct.

Nothing in this policy undermines AISNE's ability to assess the accreditation status of an accredited school if the school undergoes what AISNE deems to be a "precipitous event." A "Precipitous Event" is a significant change / challenge that has the potential to impact the school's actual or perceived stability. A precipitous event may include, but is not limited to, significant disruptions in financial status, physical space, or leadership.

AISNE may require the submission of documentation and/or a visit (either virtual or on-campus) to determine whether accreditation should be continued or whether it should impose any conditions for continued accreditation. The accredited school will be given written notice of the nature of the adverse report, allegation, or complaint if AISNE deems an assessment is warranted. However, advance notice for such an inspection or visitation will not be required. The accredited school may respond to any allegations or complaints before a final determination is made.

Any action undertaken by AISNE as the result of an allegation or complaint will remain a matter between AISNE and the accredited school. The decision whether to notify the reporting party or make any public comment concerning the status of an accredited school or any other issue considered by AISNE will be made at the discretion of AISNE's leadership.

Loss of accreditation status

In the instance that a school decides it is in their best interest to relinquish their AISNE accreditation status, and voluntarily withdraws from AISNE's accreditation program, the Membership Committee will be notified and the school's status changed from that of "Full Member" to that of "In-Region Associate Member". New dues will go into effect at the start of the fiscal year immediately following the school's communication of its decision. A formal letter of notification will be sent to the Head of School and Board Chair acknowledging the school's decision, noting its impact on the school's membership status, and sharing the amount of the school's new annual dues. No further action is necessary on the part of the school or the AISNE staff.

In some instances, AISNE's Membership Committee may vote to revoke a school's accreditation. This may occur in the following circumstances:

- 1) The school does not successfully complete the required Corrective Action(s) after being placed into Provisional accreditation status. This may include failure to host a visit after a requested postponement, failure to adequately address standards failed during a decennial visit or 5-year Interim visit.

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- 2) The school has not adhered to the requirements articulated in AISNE's Eligibility Criteria. This may include failure to maintain an annual audit.
 - 3) The school has not completed annual reporting requirements.
 - 4) The school has committed egregious mid-cycle violations of AISNE's community standards or Standards for Accreditation.

If the Membership Committee votes to revoke a school's accreditation, and this action is endorsed by a vote of the full AISNE Board of Directors, the school's status changed from that of "Full Member" to that of "In-Region Associate Member". New dues will go into effect at the start of the fiscal year immediately following the school's communication of its decision. A formal letter of notification will be sent to the Head of School and Board Chair explaining the Board's decision, noting its impact on the school's membership status, sharing the amount of the school's new annual dues, and sharing required additional actions. Specifically, the following special requirements will be in place for schools that have their accreditation revoked:

- 1) Schools are required to notify all current members of their community (current Board members, employees, and families) of the loss of accreditation.
- 2) Should the school wish to reapply for AISNE accreditation, a waiting period of 5 years is required prior to initiating such an application. Schools in this situation are required to show evidence of progress made in the areas of concern that led to the revocation of accreditation.

APPENDIX A — AISNE Eligibility Criteria & Standards for Accreditation

For the fully annotated bibliography of research underpinning AISNE's Standards, click [here](#).

Eligibility Criteria

Leadership

Std. 1: Mission and Philosophy

Std. 2: Governance

Std. 3: Administration

Student Experience/Program

Std. 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

Std. 5: Student Well-Being

Std. 6: Program Resources

Std. 7: Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs (*if applicable*)

Institutional Advancement & Operations

Std. 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach

Std. 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

Std. 10: Development

Std. 11: Staffing and Human Resources

Std. 12: Finance

Std. 13: Facilities

Std. 14: Safety and Risk Management

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

AISNE-accredited schools and candidates for AISNE accreditation must comply with these eligibility criteria at all times in order to achieve and maintain full accreditation status.

The School:

1. Has a clear statement of mission and philosophy.
2. Serves one or more grades within the elementary, middle, and / or high school divisions. (Grades 1 – Post-Graduate)
3. Is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization as attested by federal and state records.
4. Has a non-discrimination statement as required by law.
5. Is governed by an appropriately constituted and substantially independent governing board, in accordance with the by-laws of the corporation.
6. Has policies and procedures to ensure that any perceived or actual conflicts of interest for board members are disclosed and managed appropriately.
7. Has an annual audit of the school's financial statements, performed by an independent certified public accountant.
8. Has a process for the ongoing monitoring of its compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION – LEADERSHIP

Standard 1: Mission and Philosophy

The school's stated mission and philosophy guide all aspects of its operation and program.

Indicator 1: The school periodically reviews its mission and philosophy.

Indicator 2: The school continuously examines and assesses how it is achieving its mission and philosophy.

Indicator 3: The school's curriculum and teaching methods advance its mission and philosophy.

Indicator 4: The School articulates to its community how diversity, equity, and inclusion are reflected in the mission and philosophy of the school.

Indicator 5: As a core part of its mission, the school values the quality of life of all members of its community and takes actions to create a safe, inclusive, equitable, and just environment.

Standard 2: Governance

The school's board and leadership operate in a collaborative partnership that provides effective oversight, strategic vision, and resource development to sustain and promote the school's mission and philosophy.

Indicator 1: The school's articles of incorporation and by-laws articulate its institutional leadership structure and are in alignment with both best practice and legal requirements.

Indicator 2: The governing board's membership and committee structures advance the school's mission and vision, and provide fiduciary oversight in order to ensure both the stability and sustainability of the school.

Indicator 3: The governing board recognizes its role as a strategic, policy-setting body.

Indicator 4: The governing board engages in strategic, long-range financial planning.

Indicator 5: The governing board establishes policies that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensures that these policies are reflected in both the make-up of the board and its decision-making process.

Indicator 6: The governing board conducts board development, including annual new trustee orientation, ongoing trustee education, board evaluation and self-evaluation, and board leadership succession planning.

Indicator 7: The governing board delegates authority to the Head of School for school operations while also providing appropriate support.

Indicator 8: The governing board hires and enters into a written contract with the Head of

School and regularly evaluates the head's performance through a mutually agreed upon procedure.

Indicator 9: The governing board contributes to the advancement work of the school, including financial support and active involvement in annual and capital fundraising.

Standard 3: Administration

The school's administration implements and manages the educational program and school operations in accordance with its mission and philosophy.

Indicator 1: The school has an effective administrative structure to manage the essential areas of school leadership and meet the strategic needs of the school.

Indicator 2: The school's administration works to establish and implement policies that reflect its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to ensure that these values are reflected in decision making.

Indicator 3: The school's strategic plan and goals provide annual direction for the administration.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION – STUDENT EXPERIENCE / PROGRAM

Standard 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

The school provides a mission-driven educational program that promotes learning and personal growth.

Indicator 1: The school has a systematic and collaborative process by which faculty and administration document, review, evaluate, and revise the educational program.

Indicator 2: The school’s curriculum and teaching practices are supported by current research and developmentally-appropriate practices.

Indicator 3: The school’s teaching practices, curriculum, and co-curriculum reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Indicator 4: The content and design of the educational program enable students to develop skills to navigate a complex future.

Indicator 5: The school effectively assesses students and communicates their progress to families.

Indicator 6: The school's extracurricular and co-curricular programs support and advance its mission and philosophy.

Standard 5: Student Well-Being

The school fosters physical, emotional, and mental health, safety, and well-being through its programs and services.

Indicator 1: The school provides regular, age-appropriate programs for students that address physical and emotional well-being and healthy lifestyles.

Indicator 2: The school’s program content, teaching methods, and assessment practices meet student developmental needs and abilities.

Indicator 3: The school recognizes differences within the student body -- including gender, ability/disability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, family structure, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice -- and understands how aspects of student identity impact well-being.

Indicator 4: The school’s dining facilities, staff, and menu support the health and well-being of students.

Indicator 5: The school has systems to provide appropriate support for students experiencing mental health issues.

Standard 6: Program Resources

The school has the resources and services necessary to meet student needs and support the delivery of the educational program in a manner consistent with its mission.

Indicator 1: The school's educational resources are sufficient to support the program.

Indicator 2: Learning services and support programs meet the needs of all students, consistent with the school's mission and educational program.

Indicator 3: The school provides next-school counseling that meets the needs of students and families.

Standard 7: (If Applicable) Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs:

The school's residential, homestay, and/or exchange programs provide a caring, thoughtfully planned, and mission-consistent experience for students.

Indicator 1: The residential program is well-defined and congruent with the mission of the school, and is implemented to provide a healthy, balanced, and enriching experience for students.

Indicator 2: The residential, homestay, and exchange programs are integrated into the life of the school and provide positive and meaningful connections between residential, exchange, and day students, fostered by their shared experiences of school life.

Indicator 3: The residential, homestay, and exchange programs have defined educational goals and objectives.

Indicator 4: Thoughtful programming and activities for students after class hours and on weekends are mission-driven, with a clear rationale based on the school's priorities for students' social development.

Indicator 5: Comprehensive, well-developed residential, homestay, and/or exchange policies are consistently applied and regularly reviewed.

Indicator 6: Residential staff and/or homestay host families have clearly articulated responsibilities and are trained based on specific goals for the residential student experience.

Indicator 7: The school has a clearly-defined and implemented program for the regular supervision and evaluation of residential staff and/or homestay host families that takes into account the care of international and boarding students.

Indicator 8: The school allocates adequate resources to meet the needs of residential, homestay, and exchange students.

Indicator 9: (If applicable) The school has a formal, written agreement for homestay students, their guardians, and host families that defines expectations and addresses health, safety, and well-being.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION – INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT & OPERATIONS

Standard 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach

The school's enrollment management program is designed and operated with sufficient resources to support the school's mission and educational program.

Indicator 1: The school clearly defines the range and type of students appropriate for admission and has a delineated process to screen, admit, and enroll students.

Indicator 2: The school consistently follows policies and procedures regarding admission, including scholarship (if applicable) and financial aid (if applicable), that promote the school's goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Indicator 3: The school understands the most significant enrollment variables and trends that drive its ability to meet its income goals and plans accordingly.

Indicator 4: The school has the organizational structure, resources, and staffing to carry out its admission efforts.

Indicator 5: The school has an external marketing program with sufficient staff and resources to execute its goals.

Standard 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

The school engages in clear and proactive communication with its constituents and is actively involved in its community.

Indicator 1: The school communicates clear, substantive, and timely information to families concerning the educational program and school procedures.

Indicator 2: The school engages proactively with families and is mindful of the ways in which families may be affected differently by school policies and programs.

Indicator 3: The administration ensures that communication channels are available to students, families, faculty, and staff to offer suggestions and voice concerns.

Indicator 4: The school cultivates a partnership with families.

Indicator 5: The school fosters and maintains a positive relationship with the local community.

Standard 10: Development

The school's fundraising program supports the mission and educational program of the school and contributes to the school's financial health.

Indicator 1: The administration and governing board have identified and articulated the school's long- and short-term institutional development needs.

Indicator 2: The school has the organizational structure, resources, and staffing to carry out its fundraising efforts.

Indicator 3: The school has an engagement strategy that addresses a variety of constituent groups.

Standard 11: Staffing and Human Resources

The school recruits and retains employees who are well-qualified for their positions, are supported through supervision, evaluation, and professional development, and are sufficient in number to support the school's mission.

Indicator 1: Employees are qualified for their specific responsibilities by training, education, and experience.

Indicator 2: The staffing model is sufficient to fulfill the school's mission and educational program.

Indicator 3: The school's employment practices are clear and consistent, and are implemented in a manner that avoids bias.

Indicator 4: The school provides its employees with clear, written employment policies and ensures that those policies are implemented equitably.

Indicator 5: Personnel practices provide equitable treatment among work groups with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions.

Indicator 6: The school attends to the well-being of employees and has systems and resources to support their emotional and physical health.

Indicator 7: Board and school leadership regularly review and adjust employees' compensation in order to attract and retain a well-qualified staff.

Indicator 8: The school has a clearly-defined and consistently implemented program for the regular supervision and evaluation of employee performance.

Indicator 9: All faculty, administrators, and staff participate in a clearly-defined program for professional growth.

Indicator 10: *(If Applicable)* The school's Intern/Apprentice Teaching Program is formally defined, structured, resourced, and implemented and supports the school's mission and philosophy and the growth of new teachers.

Standard 12: Finance

The school practices effective financial management, and its financial operations, resources, planning, and oversight are adequate to support the school's mission and sustain its long-term viability and stability.

Indicator 1: The administration implements sound fiscal practices and procedures, including the development of a board-approved annual operating and capital budget, multi-year budget projections, appropriate controls, and the execution of an annual audit.

Indicator 2: The board and administration work collaboratively and strategically to ensure the development and implementation of appropriate policies, practices, and processes for the sustainable, long-term financial management of the school.

Indicator 3: The board and administration engage in periodic benchmarking to assess factors that could impact the school's financial health.

Indicator 4: The board, in partnership with the administration, regularly considers the best use and management of endowment and reserve funds.

Standard 13: Facilities

The school's facilities support the mission and educational program of the school and are maintained in a manner that is sustainable and responsive to changing needs.

Indicator 1: The school's facilities support and enhance the school's ability to implement its educational program and services consistent with the mission.

Indicator 2: The school's facilities are safe and welcoming to students and adults.

Indicator 3: The school's policies and decisions support environmental sustainability, and the school makes ongoing efforts to mitigate its environmental impact.

Indicator 4: The school is attentive to current and future maintenance of its facilities by creating and implementing plans in support of the mission and educational program.

Indicator 5: The school engages in long-range facilities planning that addresses campus maintenance, improvement, or expansion; is incorporated into the school's strategic and long-range financial plans; and is reviewed on a regular basis.

Indicator 6: *(If Applicable)* The school undergoes periodic independent safety review of outdoor education, experiential education, or wilderness equipment.

Standard 14: Safety and Risk Management

The school implements policies and procedures that promote a safe and healthy school environment consistent with its mission and has a comprehensive approach to risk management.

Indicator 1: The school's health care services are administered and implemented by personnel whose training and experience are appropriate for the services offered and compliant with applicable regulations.

Indicator 2: The school's health services are adequate to meet the needs of its students and support the prevention of illness and injury.

Indicator 3: The school thoroughly and regularly trains all personnel in the legal requirements of mandated reporting and fosters a culture of appropriate emotional and physical boundaries between students and employees.

Indicator 4: The school ensures that all employees who supervise students have undergone thorough background and reference checks as mandated by state law.

Indicator 5: The school has a reporting procedure in place to respond to and document incidents regarding health and safety of students and employees.

Indicator 6: The school has a formal process for regularly reviewing and evaluating exposure, risk, and coverage.

Indicator 7: The school has comprehensive, written security and crisis management plans that are followed by employees.

Indicator 8: The school maintains appropriate adult-student supervision during school hours and all school-sponsored student activities and programs.

Indicator 9: The school ensures student and adult safety during on- and off-campus activities.

Indicator 10: The school's recordkeeping policy guides the maintenance of accurate, adequate, and secure records for current and former students and employees.

Indicator 11: The School has a process for the ongoing monitoring of compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.

APPENDIX B — Overview of the Accreditation Timeline

Advance Planning Year

(2 years prior to the accreditation site visit)

- **Identify Self-Study Coordinator(s)** and ensure they attend Self-Study Training with AISNE.
- **Familiarize yourself** with the [AISNE Self-Study Template](#).
- **Begin reviewing / updating your school's curriculum documentation** considering both content and format ([see instructions](#)).
- **Review your school's mission / philosophy / diversity statement** (and any other guiding statements) with your community and complete any revisions necessary before heading into the self-study. This will give you a strong foundation on which to assess mission-alignment of your programs and practices.
- **Conduct a self-evaluation** of your school's compliance with [AISNE's Eligibility Criteria and Accreditation Standards](#). If there are areas in which you are not currently in full alignment, determine what needs to be done to resolve the issue(s) prior to your accreditation visit.
- **Develop a plan for how you will use professional development time & faculty meetings** next year to engage your staff in the self-study process—create a calendar and timeline.
- **Prepare staff for what to expect from the self-study process** and establish buy-in. Plan “self-study kick-off” focusing on establishing positive morale and enthusiasm about the opportunity for collaboration.
- **Assign committees & roles for each Standard**. These typically include a Chair, contributors, writers, and editors. Consider inviting staff to express their preferences of sections to which they want to contribute.
- **Determine budget** for the accreditation process including expenses associated with preparation of the Self-Study Report and hosting the visiting team.
- **Select your accreditation site visit dates**. Schools may choose to host the visit in the fall or spring semester.

Self-Study Year

(1 year prior to the accreditation site visit)

- **Create a digital infrastructure** for Self-Study committee work.
- **Engage the full community** in committee work during the school year.
- **Gather data** and constituent input as needed.
- **Evaluate your school's [progress addressing the Recommendations](#)** from the previous accreditation visit to ensure that you have made sufficient progress before heading into the next cycle. *(NOTE: This should be completed by the Head of School.)*
- **Continue working on curriculum documentation** *(if needed)*.
- **Maintain focus, enthusiasm, and momentum**. Monitor community morale and proactively address any challenges that are arising.
- **Collect committee sections and integrate into one document**, and edit for cohesion, consistency, and one voice on behalf of the community.
- **Review and provide feedback on the Visiting Team roster**. *NOTE: This should be completed by the Head of School.)*

Decennial Visit Year *(the year of the site visit)*

- **Host a pre-visit meeting on your school's campus** to discuss logistics for the accreditation site visit with the Visiting Team Chair and AISNE's Director of Accreditation. This should be scheduled for approximately 6 months prior to your site visit.
- **Arrange for hospitality for the Visiting Team**, including making hotel and meal reservations, assembling materials and snacks for the team's workrooms, and planning for a welcome reception.
- **Create a draft schedule for the site visit** in partnership with the Visiting Team Chair.
- **Complete curriculum documentation** and disseminate to all teaching faculty to ensure buy-in.
- **Finalize all editing of the Self-Study Report**. Proofread, proofread, proofread!
- **Submit the Self-Study Report and other required materials** to AISNE 6-8 weeks prior to onsite visit.
- **Assemble [supplementary materials](#)**.
- **Prepare community members** for what to expect during the accreditation visit.
- **Celebrate the conclusion of the process after the visit!**

One-Year Action Plan *(the year after the site visit)*

- **Send a written report** (*One-Year Action Plan*, Written by the Head of School) to the Director of Accreditation. The One-Year Action Plan outlines the school's plans to address the visiting team's recommendations within five years.

Five Year Interim Visit & Report *(five year after the Visit / Y1)*

- **Send a written report** (*Five-Year School Progress Report*, written by the Head of School) to the Director of Accreditation. This Report details the school's process and progress in addressing the visiting team's recommendations.
- **Host a Five-Year interim visit** by the Director of Accreditation, a Membership Committee member, and/or the Chair of the original Visiting Team to review progress on all recommendations. The school must have adequately addressed each recommendation in order to remain fully accredited.

APPENDIX C — Job Description for Self-Study Coordinator(s)

SELF-STUDY COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Essential Qualities & Skills:

- Highly organized and detail-oriented
- Able to manage a large multi-year project
- Able to meet deadlines and embrace flexibility of shifting deadlines
- Strong writer and communicator
- Is able to work with different stakeholders including teachers, staff, families, and trustees
- Able to ask for help when necessary
- Able to motivate peers and colleagues
- Eager to take on a leadership role and has the capacity to do so

Major Tasks of the Self-Study Coordinator:

- Become familiar with the accreditation process (use *AISNE School Accreditation Handbook* as a reference) and brief members of the community about the accreditation process
- Set and monitor community morale and tone around accreditation
- Develop a budget for the accreditation process in partnership with head of school and business officer
- Break down Self-Study sections into reasonable chunks
- Select a Chairperson and assign committees for each section
- Set a timetable and guidelines for completion of the self-study report.
- Identify data that needs to be collected and develop effective method(s) for collection (e.g. Survey Monkey) - What do you want to learn? What questions do you need to ask, and of whom?
- Create digital infrastructure for completion of the Self-Study report and collection of supplementary materials (e.g. Google Docs)
- Establish guidelines for writing the report (e.g. Style Guide)
- Monitor committee work and provide constructive feedback - ensure committees are meeting deadlines.
- Finalize Self-Study report:
 - Integrate committee sections and edit for cohesion and one voice. (Consider using an outside party to review finished work for clarity.)
 - Proofread, proofread, proofread!
- Prepare for the Visiting Team:
 - Follow guidelines in *AISNE School Accreditation Handbook* for preparing (digital) supplementary materials for the Visiting Team's review.
 - Attend Pre-Visit Meeting (approx. 6 months from visit date) with Head of School, Director of Accreditation, and Visiting Team Chair.
 - Provide a draft section of the Self-Study for feedback at the pre-visit meeting.

- Coordinate travel, meals, lodging, and other logistical details for the Visiting Team.
- Prepare community members - including faculty, administrators, staff, students, and families - for what to expect during the Visit.

Helpful hint: Volunteer to serve on an AISNE Visiting Team so you know what to expect at your own school. Have your Head of School contact Beth Friedman, Director of Accreditation, to nominate you: beth@aisne.org or nominate yourself directly [here](#).

APPENDIX D — Self-Study Committee Descriptions

SUGGESTED SELF-STUDY COMMITTEES & FOCUS AREAS

Eligibility Criteria

- Gathers materials such as Non-Discrimination Statement, Articles of Incorporation, and answers factual questions regarding the school's alignment with AISNE Eligibility Criteria

Self-Study Process

- Describes the self-study process, timeline, organization, and communication
- Describes what the school has learned through the process of self-study

Leadership

Std. 1: Mission and Philosophy

- Describes the school's mission & philosophy and the process for periodic review / affirmation of the mission and other guiding principles
- Provides descriptions and examples of how the school lives its mission
- Committee includes representatives from each division / department and all stakeholder groups

Std. 2: Governance

- Describes and evaluates operations/practices of the Board of Trustees
- Written by members of the Board and others who interact with the Board

Std. 3: Administration

- Describes the administrative structure and how it supports all areas of school operations.

Student Experience/Program*

**All teaching faculty should be involved in this section in some way; however, not all faculty need to be involved in all four standards.*

Std. 4: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Life

- Analyzes curriculum at every level to ensure it aligns with mission
- Describes and evaluates teaching methods, assessment, and documentation of teaching practices
- Provides detailed examples of teaching methods and implementation of curriculum

Std. 5: Student Well-Being

- Describes programs, policies, and resources that support student physical, emotional, and mental health, safety, and well-being.

Std. 6: Program Resources

- Describes teaching resources—technology, library, instructional materials, etc.

Std. 7: Residential, Homestay, and Exchange Programs (if applicable)

- Describes the school's residential, homestay, and / or exchange program(s) including goals of the program, curriculum, and policies

Institutional Advancement & Operations

Std. 8: Enrollment Management and Outreach

- Asks detailed questions regarding all aspects of admission process and policies, including financial aid
- Describes marketing efforts
- Completes and analyzes admissions statistics

Std. 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Describes how the school communicates and engages with families and other stakeholders in all areas — from conferencing, to reporting, to volunteering
- Describes how home-school partnership and local community relationships are fostered

Std. 10: Development

- Describes fundraising plans, communication regarding soliciting money, engaging alumni

Std. 11: Staffing and Human Resources

- Describes job responsibilities/training/recruitment
- Looks for trends in staffing and staff diversity
- Evaluates and describes hiring practices
- Describes staff professional development opportunities, expectations, funding, etc.
- Describes how faculty/administrators/staff are supervised and evaluated

Std. 12: Finance

- Describes financial policies, procedures, oversight, and long-term financial planning

Std. 13: Facilities

- Describes the physical plant, its maintenance, and future plans

Std. 14: Safety and Risk Management

- Addresses all aspects of health and wellness
- Involves compliance, protocols for emergencies, anti-bullying policy, etc.

APPENDIX E — Guidance on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The world is changing. Technological innovations are rapidly shifting the way schools and other organizations operate, and the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming far more common across sectors. AISNE has developed the principles and guidelines below to help schools, Visiting Teams, and AISNE staff members responsibly incorporate AI into our work.

Guiding Principles:

1. AISNE and its schools are organizations fundamentally rooted in human interaction. Human connection, reflection, creativity and judgement should remain at the center of our work.
2. Generative AI is a tool that, when used responsibly, can help schools and Visiting Teams make the most of their limited time and resources. Supporting efficiency, assisting in synthesis of complex and copious information, and allowing for ease of documentation are all potential benefits of AI use.
3. Accreditation is not simply an exercise in documentation. When done well, the cyclical process of self-study, peer review, action planning and execution drives schools toward continuous improvement. It is inclusive and collaborative, anchored in honest reflection and realistic goal-setting, and centers student success and wellbeing.
4. Privacy and data integrity are of paramount importance. School employees, Visiting Teams, and AISNE staff should only utilize AI tools in a manner that can ensure that private, confidential, or sensitive information about a school is not made public.

In the interest of helping all stakeholders adhering to the principles above, while capitalizing on the power of AI tools to maximize efficiency, avoid redundancy, reduce bias, and support the effective preparation and execution of an accreditation process, AISNE has developed further guidance, laying out the “Do’s and Don’ts” of AI use, accessible [here](#). Please feel free to explore this if you plan to utilize AI as part of your visit preparation, execution, or follow-up.

APPENDIX F — Data Collection: Sample Surveys & Charts

AISNE expects that schools will collect data from their stakeholders to inform the self-evaluation and analysis that occurs during the Self-Study process; some of this may be part of the regular annual cadence of data collection, and some may be new and unique to the Self-Study. The most effective Self-Study processes adopt a uniform and aligned approach to data collection and analysis, rather than dispersing responsibility to each Committee.

The following surveys and charts are examples of data points that schools should consider collecting as part of the Self-Study, though each is just one possible format of many for collection, analysis and presentation.

SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION SURVEY

Position: Teacher Administrator Support Staff (circle one)

Years at the school: _____

Years of teaching experience: _____

Please complete the relevant section of the survey according to your role at the school. Circle the response that best fits your assessment of the value and frequency of each activity. If a category does not apply, simply leave it blank.

TEACHERS: Choose a number AND a letter for each category.

My Own Professional Development:

1 = of little value to me

2 = valuable and I should do much more

3 = valuable and I should do more

4 = valuable and I am satisfied with what I do

The School's Professional Development Program:

A = the school should offer many more opportunities

B = the school should offer more opportunities

C = the school offers sufficient opportunities

1	2	3	4	Visiting classes of my colleagues	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Visiting other schools	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Participation in school evaluation processes	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Observations of my classes by supervisor	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Observations of my classes by peers	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	In-house workshops during the academic year	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	In-house workshops during the summer	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Outside speakers brought into school	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Outside workshops, seminars, and conferences that I attend	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Membership in professional organizations	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in college/graduate level courses	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in Online/Distance learning courses	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Professional Learning Community/Critical Friends Group (if applicable)	A	B	C

Comments:

ADMINISTRATORS: Choose a number AND a letter for each category.

My Own Professional Development:

- 1 = of little value to me
- 2 = valuable and I should do much more
- 3 = valuable and I should do more
- 4 = valuable and I am satisfied with what I do

The School's Professional Development Program:

- A = the school should offer many more opportunities
- B = the school should offer more opportunities
- C = the school offers sufficient opportunities

1	2	3	4	Observations/Visits to classrooms of beginning faculty	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Observations/Visits to classrooms of veteran faculty	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Membership in Professional Organizations	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Outside speakers I bring into school	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Attendance at outside workshops, seminars, and conferences	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in college/graduate courses	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in Online/Distance Learning Courses	A	B	C

Comments:

SUPPORT STAFF: Choose a number AND a letter for each category.

My Own Professional Development:

- 1 = of little value to me
- 2 = valuable and I should do much more
- 3 = valuable and I should do more
- 4 = valuable and I am satisfied with what I do

The School's Prof. Dev. Program:

- A = the school should offer many more opportunities
- B = the school should offer more opportunities
- C = the school offers sufficient opportunities

1	2	3	4	Participation in school evaluation processes	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Outside speakers brought into school	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Attendance at outside workshops, seminars, and conferences	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Membership in professional organizations	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in college/graduate courses	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	Enrollment in Online/Distance learning courses	A	B	C

Comments:

ALL EMPLOYEES: Please respond to the questions below according to your most recent evaluation.

Approximate date of your last formal evaluation: _____

What did this evaluation entail (meetings with supervisor, meetings with peers, class observations, goal setting, etc.):

Did you find the evaluation helpful? Informative? Effective?

Was there a formal write-up of your evaluation?

Do you have any suggestions to help improve the evaluation process?

SAMPLE ADMISSION STATISTICS

GENERAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Please use statistics from the current year and the four previous years.

SCHOOL YEAR					
--------------------	--	--	--	--	--

ADMISSION: (data in #)

Inquiries					
Interviews or visits					
Applications					
Acceptances					
Yield (as a percentage)	%	%	%	%	%
Siblings enrolled					

FINANCIAL AID: (data in \$)

Funds allocated					
Funds granted					

EXPENDITURES: (data in %)

Aid granted as % of tuition revenue	%	%	%	%	%
Aid to faculty children as % of aid granted	%	%	%	%	%
Aid to BIPOC students as % of aid granted	%	%	%	%	%
% of BIPOC students receiving aid	%	%	%	%	%
% of aid by gender (female/male/non-binary)	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB

ENROLLMENT: (data in #)

Total enrolled					
Total enrollment by gender (female/male/non-binary)	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB	F/M/NB
Total families					
Attrition (as a percentage, see formula below*)	%	%	%	%	%

*((previous year's enrollment - graduates) – (total enrollment - new students))÷(previous year's enrollment – graduates)

BIPOC STUDENTS — STATISTICAL INFORMATION

In filling out each section use statistics from the current year and the four previous years.

SCHOOL YEAR					
--------------------	--	--	--	--	--

ENROLLMENT: (# of)

Total BIPOC students enrolled					
Total BIPOC student families (including transracial adoptees)					
List racial/ethnic sub-categories used to track student demographics					

ADMISSION PROCESS: (# of)

BIPOC Students Interviewed					
BIPOC Students Applications					
BIPOC Students Accepted					
BIPOC Students Enrolled					

BIPOC ENROLLMENT BY GRADE: (# of)

Grades: K (include N-PreK)					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					

SAMPLE STAFFING STATISTICS

STAFFING — STATISTICAL INFORMATION

In filling out each section use statistics from the current year and the four previous years. Include all paid personnel: teaching faculty, administrators, and support staff.

SCHOOL YEAR

--	--	--	--

STAFF ADDITIONS: (# of)

Replacements					
New Positions*					
New Programs*					
Other (please elaborate)					
TOTAL					

*Since new programs sometimes create the need for new positions, you may want to describe the relationship between these two categories.

STAFF ATTRITION: (# of)

Resignation					
Retirement					
Leave					
Position Eliminated					
Other					
TOTAL					

STAFF COMPOSITION: (# of)

Faculty/staff by gender (female/male/non-binary)					
BIPOC faculty/staff*					
Full-time					
Part-time					
# with Master's					
# with Doctorate					

*Please specify total number of BIPOC faculty/staff in addition to the number of faculty/staff using the racial/ethnic sub-categories used by the school to track employee demographics.

SAMPLE TEACHING STAFF CHART

Please complete the Current Teaching Staff Chart using marks within the boxes to indicate each individual.

YEARS AT YOUR SCHOOL	21+					
	16-20					
	11-15					
	6-10					
	0-5					
		0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
		TOTAL YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE				

APPENDIX G — AISNE Appropriate Use of School Accreditation Process and Visiting Team Report

The Association of Independent Schools in New England’s accreditation process is not a substitute for each school’s own internal evaluation of itself and its effectiveness, which should be ongoing.

The charge of the Visiting Team is to determine the actual performance of a school in numerous categories as it existed in the school, its program, and its procedures at one moment in time. Hence, the Visiting Team Report is an objective description of circumstances as they appeared to trained and experienced peer educators. Any use of the Visiting Team Report as an official assessment of a school employee’s professional competency would violate the professional ethics under which a school’s evaluation is conducted. The AISNE 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 members of the Visiting Team voluntarily reflected their professional judgment in arriving at the conclusions reported in the accreditation documents. They are willing to support the thoughtful evaluations that they have made, provided these documents are used appropriately and in the spirit in which they are intended. However, they are not to be held accountable for an injudicious or unauthorized use of these documents or parts thereof. Accreditation by AISNE or the Visiting Team Report should not be relied upon by current or prospective families and/or students of a particular school as a basis for criticism about the school or about the experience of a particular family and/or student.

The school may publish the commendations and recommendations from the Visiting Team Report; however, it is not acceptable to paraphrase from the Visiting Team Report for purposes of publicity or public relations. Excerpts from the Visiting Team Report may not be used either on the school’s website or public media. The Visiting Team Report in its entirety should be shared with the school’s board, and may be shared with faculty and staff, families, and other stakeholders at the discretion of the head of school.

Any unauthorized or inappropriate use of the Visiting Team Report may result in sanctions as deemed appropriate by AISNE. If there is any question about the appropriate use of the Visiting Team Report, the AISNE Director of Accreditation should be consulted.