



**ASSOCIATION OF  
INDEPENDENT MARYLAND & DC SCHOOLS**

**ACCREDITATION GUIDE  
6.6 EDITION**

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**PROCEDURES**

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**SELF-STUDY GUIDE**

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**STANDARDS**

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## PREFACE

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Founded in 1967, the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools is a voluntary association of about 120 schools in Maryland and the District of Columbia. The Association serves approximately 45,000 children and 6,000 professional educators. One of the Association's central purposes is to support efforts by member schools to improve pedagogy, curriculum, and other areas of school operation. Accreditation is one powerful means to achieve that end. While the Association is a voluntary organization, every member school is required to be accredited in order to demonstrate its commitment to high standards and on-going self improvement.

AIMS began to develop its accreditation protocols in 1980, and it has been awarding accreditation since 1983. Since that time, AIMS has regularly reviewed its Accreditation Procedures, Self-Study Guide, and Standards. The 6.6 Edition of the Accreditation Guide includes significant changes, including local Standards for AIMS-member schools in the District of Columbia. These DC Standards mirror those for AIMS schools in Maryland and address issues of safety, public trust, educational standards, and records retention.

Reflecting the complex economic environment in which independent schools now operate, this Edition also includes a new financial Standard: "The School demonstrates the institutional capability and resources necessary to remain financially viable for a minimum period of three years."

Successful completion of the AIMS accreditation process represents a stiff challenge and a major accomplishment for any school. The continued enthusiasm of AIMS member schools for a process that involves a vigorous 18-month self-study and preparation of a written Self-Study Report, an intensive three-day visit by a team of outside educators, and the development of a written Action Plan for school improvement, is evidence of their dedication and the high standards to which they hold themselves. The AIMS Evaluation Guide, 6.6 Edition, is thus a testament to its member schools, whose dedication to excellence in serving their students is palpable throughout these pages.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSES

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The AIMS evaluation process serves three primary purposes. First, it assures quality by requiring member schools to meet or exceed AIMS Standards. Second, it promotes institutional reflection, analysis, and self-assessment by asking each school to demonstrate a high degree of congruence between its current practice and its philosophy statement. Third, to assure continuing quality, the evaluation process requires each school to develop a written Action Plan that charts a course for future school improvement.<sup>1</sup>

The accreditation process thus calls schools to account — both to the Association and to themselves — for the day-to-day quality with which they serve their students. It also challenges schools to engage in a continuous process of analysis and self-reflection, to spurn complacency, and to set the bar of excellence high — in effect, to model the lifelong habits of mind that are instilled in their students. *It is the students, after all, for whom these efforts are made, and their interests must remain central throughout the evaluation process.*

The AIMS evaluation process attempts to strike these appropriate balances for its member schools: it preserves each school's independence, while assuring compliance with Association Standards; it focuses on each school's current performance, while encouraging it to plan for the future; and it stresses the importance of a thorough and extensive self-examination, yet values depth and quality of thought over volume.

The heart of the AIMS evaluation process is the self-study, which results in a written Self-Study Report. The quality of the AIMS process is largely dependent upon the seriousness with which each school takes its responsibility to use the self-study to analyze, reflect upon, and to accurately and honestly record its own strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, the AIMS process requires of its member schools no less than they require of their students.

The self-study must be broadly inclusive, and it must proceed by consensus. These are critical to the process, not because AIMS values one style of school leadership over another; in fact, AIMS values the differences among its member schools. Rather, inclusion and consensus support the Association's efforts to draw the most accurate and representative conclusions about the school community in its efforts to serve its students. Faculty involvement in the process must be deep and broad, reflecting their place of primary importance in AIMS schools. Trustees must be thoroughly involved in the review of governance practices within the school. The role of parents in the self-study will be more limited, reflecting the responsibility of professional educators to establish curriculum and pedagogy, and to run the school.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Procedures, page 5, for a statement regarding the purposes for which the evaluation may not be used.

At the conclusion of the process, the successful school is granted accreditation because it has demonstrated compliance with AIMS Standards and has shown a high degree of congruence between its philosophy and daily practice. While a school's plans for the future are essential to the process — the Action Plan demonstrates the school's commitment to continued self-improvement — accreditation, in the final analysis, is about the school's *current* performance and the quality with which it serves those students who pass through its doors each and every day. The evaluation and long-range or strategic planning processes thus serve essentially different purposes: the former subordinates future planning to the extensive audit of current operations; the latter emphasizes a school's plans for the future over the evaluation of its current operations. Yet, because evaluation and strategic planning often complement one another in powerful ways, AIMS encourages schools that have already developed long-range or strategic plans to incorporate them appropriately into their self-studies. Ideally, however, the self-study process, with its thorough look at present realities within the school, will precede and form the basis for the school's long-range or strategic planning process.

Finally, the AIMS evaluation process implicitly upholds two noble propositions that are true of all member schools, despite their many differences. First, a school's ability to form a true community of learners depends to a high degree upon the success with which it promotes and supports continuous analysis, reflection, and learning by the school's professional educators. Second, each school's highest purpose must always be to serve its students with excellence, according to its own vision for their education. The AIMS evaluation process could serve no higher purpose than to help schools achieve these lofty goals.

# EVALUATION PROCEDURES

## Table of Contents

I.	THE EVALUATION CYCLE .....	1
II.	CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT' .....	3
III.	EXTENSIONS AND DELAYS.....	3
IV.	PRESCRIPTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS .....	3
V.	COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS .....	4
VI.	SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION .....	4
VII.	APPEALS .....	4
VIII.	APPROPRIATE USES OF EVALUATION PROCESS.....	5
IX.	THE SELF-STUDY .....	6
X.	THE VISIT.....	7
XI.	THE VISITING TEAM REPORT .....	11
XII.	DISTRIBUTION AND PUBLICITY .....	13
XIII.	THE ACTION PLAN .....	13
XIV.	FIVE-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT .....	16

## EVALUATION PROCEDURES

### I. The Evaluation Cycle

All Schools must be accredited in order to remain members in AIMS. The process begins when the School files a Registration Form (see Appendix A). For accredited members, this must be done three years prior to expiration of the current accreditation period; for all other Schools, the Registration Form is filed two years after designation as a Provisional Member.

Throughout this Evaluation Guide, the following benchmark periods should be kept in mind.

1. Formal Visits are scheduled at ten-year intervals.
2. The ten-year accreditation period runs from one Action Plan approval to the next.
3. The Five-Year Report is due five years from the date of the most recent visit.

*AIMS evaluation and accreditation follows a twelve-year cycle, including the self-study, formal visit, and Action Plan. An outline of the process may be found below. (See also Appendices C, D, and E.)*

Visiting Team and Five-Year Reports are reviewed by the AIMS Accreditation Committee, which makes recommendations to the AIMS Board of Trustees. Decisions regarding a School's accreditation status are made by the Board of Trustees. *Accreditation is always subject to review; the Board and/or the Accreditation Committee may require a School to demonstrate continued compliance with Standards through interim reports or visits, and may impose interim conditions.*

#### Years 1 & 2 – The Self-Study

Two years prior to the Accreditation Visiting Team's arrival on campus, a self-study steering committee is appointed by the Head of School and a budget is created (see Appendix B). The self-study begins with a review of the School's statement of philosophy, culminating in formal Board approval. The first year of the self-study should also be used to develop timetables, appoint subcommittees, and begin a review of the School's curriculum documentation. The School should discuss with AIMS as soon as possible an appropriate manner of presentation of the curriculum. See the Program section of the Self-Study Guide.

The self-study results in a written Report that responds to each area of inquiry in the AIMS Self-Study Guide. The Self-Study Report must be submitted to AIMS no later than four to six weeks prior to the formal visit of the Accreditation Team. AIMS will establish a formal deadline for submission once the dates of the visit have been determined.

### Year 3 – The Visit

The School makes final preparations for the visit of the Accreditation Visiting Team. Four months prior to the visit, the Head of School meets with the Chair of the Visiting Team. At this meeting, the Chair, among other things, reviews the School's progress in completing its Self-Study Report and receives an audited financial statement for the most recent fiscal year. Four weeks before the visit, the Visiting Team meets for the first time at the School. At this meeting, the Team receives copies of the Self-Study Report, becomes familiar with the School's campus, and is trained by a member of the AIMS staff.

Following the visit, the Team Chair meets with the Accreditation Committee to review the Team Report. Following that meeting, the Report is sent to the Head of School and Board Chair. The full Report must be made available to the entire faculty and Board of Trustees.

### Year 4 – The Action Plan/Accreditation Granted

The School analyzes the Report and prepares the Action Plan, which is due to AIMS no later than one year following the formal visit, by October 1<sup>st</sup> for fall visit, or March 1<sup>st</sup> for spring visits. Following submission of the Action Plan, the Visiting Team Chair and one other member of the Visiting Team may revisit the School. The Action Plan is reviewed by the Accreditation Committee, which then makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees whether accreditation should be granted. The AIMS Board of Trustees makes a final determination whether to grant the School accreditation for a ten-year period.

### Years 5 and 6

No formal action is required.

### Year 7

No formal action is required. The School begins to write the Five-Year Report (see Procedures, p. 14).

### Year 8 – The Five-Year Report

Five years following the visit, the School submits to AIMS a Five-Year Report, which must include significant changes (see Procedures, p. 16). A two-person team, comprised of one member of the original Accreditation Visiting Team and one member of the Accreditation Committee, visits the School and reports to the Accreditation Committee.

### Years 9 and 10

No formal action is required.

### Year 11

The School begins a new evaluation cycle.

## **II. Choice of Instrument**

AIMS and the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges have a reciprocal relationship whereby each recognizes the other's accreditation. As a result, AIMS–member Schools have three options: 1) AIMS–only accreditation; 2) joint AIMS and Middle States Accreditation; 3) Middle States–only accreditation.

1. **Joint Accreditation.** Schools that elect joint accreditation must use the AIMS instrument. In such cases, AIMS will administer the process and will coordinate directly with Middle States.
2. **Middle States Accreditation.** AIMS only recognizes the *Reflections on Standards of Quality* instrument. The School must complete an AIMS Registration Form and meet all AIMS Standards, but administration of the process will be by Middle States, and the School will be responsible to coordinate directly with them. Copies of the Middle States Visiting Team Report and accreditation letter must be submitted to AIMS by the School.

## **III. Extensions and Delays**

*Petitions to extend the accreditation period* — beyond the five–year membership period for a Provisional Member, or beyond the ten–year accreditation period for an Accredited Member — are reviewed by the AIMS Board of Trustees. Such requests may be granted upon a showing 1) of major or unforeseen change that 2) would make compliance with the ten–year deadlines a substantial and unwarranted burden upon the School.

The AIMS Board may grant such requests in its sole discretion, on a case–by–case basis, provided that the School is meeting all Standards. In the event the Board determines that one or more Standards are not being met, it may designate the School a Provisional Member, in accordance with Article 8(A) of the AIMS Constitution.

*Requests for delays that would not extend the accreditation period* will be considered by the Executive Director on a case–by–case basis. Requests made within four months of a scheduled visit, if granted, may result in a substantial administrative fee. Failure by a School to submit a completed Self–Study Report, on or before four weeks prior to a scheduled visit, will be considered a request for a delay.

## **IV. Prescriptive Recommendations**

The Visiting Team may make a prescriptive recommendation under any of the following circumstances:

- When the School has failed a Standard;
- When the recommendation addresses a serious safety concern;
- When the Team adopts a recommendation made by the School;
- When the Team concludes that, although the School passed a particular Standard, its performance needs improvement relative to its mission or good practice.



## **V. Compliance with Standards**

Decisions to accredit a School require a showing of the following:

- All Standards have been met;
- The School has complied with all other requirements of the accreditation process.

## **VI. Suspension and Revocation**

At any time during a School's membership in AIMS, the AIMS Board may, upon a preliminary showing that an accredited School may not be in compliance with all AIMS Standards, require an interim visit to the School. Subsequent to the visit, should the Board determine that any AIMS Standard is not being met, the Board may 1) require the School to take corrective action, or 2) suspend or revoke a School's accreditation. An interim visit is not required for the Board to act upon a recommendation from the Accreditation Committee for suspension or revocation when a site visit has already taken place.

## **VII. Appeals**

Any decision in the Accreditation process that may adversely affect a School's accreditation status may be appealed by the School. In such cases, the Head of School may appear before the Accreditation Committee before it makes a final recommendation to the AIMS Board. The Executive Director will provide written notification of appeal rights to the Head of School and the Board Chair.

A School that wishes to appeal an adverse decision must observe the following procedures:

1. Within sixty days of receipt of written notification of the adverse decision, the School must submit its written appeal to the Executive Director. The written appeal must include the following information:
  - a. The exact decision being appealed.
  - b. The reasons why the School believes the decision was in error.
  - c. Any evidence supporting the School's position.
2. The School's prior accreditation and membership status will remain in effect until a final decision is reached.
3. When a decision by the Accreditation Committee is appealed, the appeal shall first be heard by the Committee. The Head and one trustee may attend the appeal hearing before the Committee. If the Committee confirms the original decision, an appeal may be taken to the AIMS Board of Trustees.
4. The AIMS Board will hear appeals from decisions by the Accreditation Committee or from its own decisions adversely affecting a School's accreditation status.

5. The Head of School and a trustee will have the right to appear before the AIMS Board before it reaches a final decision.
6. In considering the appeal, the AIMS Board of Trustees may consider the following, and any other information it deems pertinent:
  - a. The Self–Study and Accreditation Visiting Team Report.
  - b. The minutes of relevant Accreditation Committee meetings.
  - c. The written appeal and all supporting materials.
  - d. Oral presentation to the Board by the Head of School and/or a Trustee.
  - e. Statements by the Chairs of the Visiting Team and Accreditation Committee.
  - f. Any other information the Board may deem relevant.
7. Should the AIMS Board affirm the Accreditation Committee’s decision, it may 1) designate the School a Provisional Member, in accordance with Article 8 (B) of the AIMS Constitution, 2) terminate the School’s membership, in accordance with Article 5 of the AIMS Constitution; or 3) extend the School’s accreditation period, with or without conditions.
8. Action by the AIMS Board of Trustees is final.

### **VIII. Appropriate Uses of Evaluation Process & Accreditation**

The evaluation process utilized by AIMS is not a substitute for each individual School’s own internal evaluation of itself and its effectiveness, which should continue on an ongoing basis. For that reason, among others, the Accreditation Visiting Team Report may not, under any circumstances, be used by the School directly or indirectly, in the evaluation of the performance of any employee of the School or in any employment–related decision. Similarly, accreditation by AIMS or the Accreditation Visiting Team Report should not be relied upon by current or prospective parents and students of a particular School, as a basis for approving of, or criticizing that School. Such use of the evaluation process and the Report would be inconsistent with the purpose of the evaluation process and unauthorized by AIMS.

## **IX. The Self-Study**

### **(A) Beginning the Process**

The evaluation process begins when a School submits to AIMS a completed Registration Form. (See Appendix A). Schools that choose a Middle States–only accreditation must also submit with AIMS a Registration Form and should consult with Middle States immediately and are responsible to send to AIMS a copy of the final Report and official accreditation notification from Middle States. For AIMS–only and joint accreditations, the process below should be followed.

AIMS will appoint an Accreditation Visiting Team Chair and Visiting Team members. AIMS will consult with the Head of School regarding the appointment of the chair, but reserves the right to make all final decisions. AIMS will also schedule the formal visit, in consultation with the Head of School and the Visiting Team Chair.

At its earliest convenience, the School should schedule an orientation session by AIMS for the full faculty and Trustees.

In year one of the Evaluation Cycle, the School should appoint a steering committee, complete a review of its philosophy, and begin reviewing its curriculum documentation. In year two of the Evaluation Cycle, the School must complete the Self-Study Report, responding to all areas of inquiry in the Self-Study Guide.

### **(B) Steering Committee Formation and Composition**

The self-study process is guided by a Steering Committee, whose Chair or Co-chairs is appointed by the Head of School. AIMS strongly recommends that the Chair not be the Head of School. The Steering Committee Chair(s), with approval of the Head of School, will appoint members of the Steering Committee, keeping in mind the need for the process to be inclusive and to proceed by consensus.

### **(C) Preparation of the Self-Study Report**

The Steering Committee will organize the School into sub-committees that reflect both the School's organization and the structure of the Accreditation Instrument. The process must be broadly inclusive of the faculty. The Governance section of the Self-Study Guide must be prepared and approved by the full Board of Trustees. Parent, alumni, and student involvement may be appropriately limited to the School and Community section.

The Self-Study Report should be concise and reflect the quality and depth of the School's thought and reflection. *In considering the length of the Report, the School should be concise and opt for brevity, except where the complexity of the topic being addressed requires a lengthy answer.* See Schedule of Required Documentation, Appendix H.

The Report must be completed and submitted to AIMS no later than four to six weeks prior to the visit — in time for distribution to the Accreditation Visiting Team at its four-week

orientation session. AIMS will establish a firm submission deadline once the formal visit has been scheduled.

## **X. The Visit**

### **(A) Selecting The Accreditation Visiting Team**

The Accreditation Visiting Team is comprised of educators whose experience, independence of judgment, and seriousness of purpose will assure the rigor and integrity of the visit, consistent with AIMS' evaluation Philosophy and Purposes. Selection of the Chair and Team members is made solely by AIMS, in consultation with the Head of School.

Whenever possible, the composition of the Visiting Team will be consistent with the following:

1. The Visiting Team Chair will be a Head or Assistant Head of an independent School.
2. Whenever possible, one-third of the Visiting Team will have prior experience on an Accreditation Visiting Team and at least fifty percent of the Visiting Team will be from AIMS member Schools. For AIMS-only evaluations, the School may request that up to twenty percent of the Visiting Team come from non-AIMS member Schools.
3. While some Visiting Team members should be from Schools with philosophies similar to that of the School being visited, the Visiting Team should represent, to the extent possible, the diversity of Schools in AIMS.
4. The Visiting Team should reflect, to the extent possible, the School's size, divisions, and program areas.
5. The Visiting Team will be not less than five members, including the Chair. Team size will vary with the size of the School and the breadth and complexity of its educational programs. Generally, 1 team member is appointed for every five faculty members. However, this number may vary with individual school differences.
6. For joint accreditations with Middle States, AIMS will appoint the Visiting Team Chair and Middle States will appoint the Vice-Chair; and Middle States will appoint approximately one-third of the Team members. The overall administration of the process will be by AIMS.

### **(B) Accreditation Visiting Team Charge and Responsibilities**

Each member of the Accreditation Visiting Team must remain focused on the philosophy and purposes of the AIMS accreditation process (see Philosophy and Purposes tab in this Guide), understand and respect the School's philosophy, maintain a high degree of objectivity and independence, and keep the best interests of the students at the heart of the process. The Visiting Team is charged with preparation of a written Report that is respectful, high-minded, cogent, and addresses clearly and constructively those areas in which the School should improve. The Visiting Team must hold the School accountable both for the implementation of its statement of philosophy and to meet each and every AIMS Standard.

The Visiting Team has an important responsibility to independently verify information provided by the School in its Self-Study Report. Although AIMS does not expect that Visiting Teams will find discrepancies between its observations and the Self-Study Report, Team members must be alert to this possibility. Such discrepancies should be clearly noted in the Visiting Team Report.

While the Self-Study Report is essential to the Team's understanding of the School, AIMS expects Team members to go beyond the Report, in terms of observations or recommendations, whenever and wherever the facts may lead. The School's Report is due considerable weight and respect, and yet the Team is expected to use independent judgment in shaping the Visiting Team Report.

*Each member of the Accreditation Visiting Team has the following responsibilities:*

1. Attend the Visiting Team training session approximately four weeks prior to the visit.
2. Become thoroughly familiar with AIMS' evaluation Philosophy and Purposes, Procedures, Self-Study Guide, and Standards.
3. Become thoroughly familiar with the School's statement of philosophy.
4. Remain on-site for the entire visit, including staying overnight in the accommodations provided by the School.
5. Remain objective throughout the visit, and listen without agreeing to any requests and appeals by individual members of the School's community, including its teachers and students. The purpose of the visit is not to produce a laundry list of requests from individuals within the School community; rather, it is to accurately convey the aggregated observations and experiences of the Visiting Team during its visit and to make global, non-prescriptive recommendations for the future.
6. Carry out the assignments made by the Visiting Team Chair.
7. Visit classes without being disruptive or giving the impression that the teacher is being evaluated. The purpose of class visits is not to evaluate the individual teacher, but to draw a conclusion, based upon the Visiting Team's aggregated observations, about whether or not the School is implementing its stated philosophy.
8. **Maintain the strictest confidentiality.** Visiting Team members must communicate with one another carefully and discreetly during the visit, and they may not communicate to anyone not on the Team any information about the School. Except for the Team Chair, Visiting Team members may not take with them any materials about the School after the visit.

*The Visiting Team Chair has the following additional responsibilities:*

1. As soon as the Visiting Team has been formed, send a welcoming letter to each Team member. Team members will be asked in advance for their subcommittee preferences.

2. Assure that each Visiting Team member discharges his or her responsibilities, as outlined above.
3. Assign the Vice–Chair such responsibilities as are appropriate.
4. Visit the School approximately four months before the visit. (See Appendix I.). At the four–month visit, the Chair will review with the Head of School the School’s self–study progress to determine whether or not the School is on schedule; receive a copy of a final audit statement for the School’s prior fiscal year; be certain appropriate arrangements have been made for the visit, including overnight accommodations and transportation, working space at the School, and an adequate number of appropriate computers and printers. Work with the Head of School to assure that the School will be ready for the Visiting Team training session, approximately four weeks before the visit.
5. Work with the Head of School and AIMS to schedule and coordinate a Visiting Team training session, approximately four weeks before the visit. On the same day as the training session, the Chair should also meet with the Head of School to: become familiar with the campus; be certain the School is scheduling appropriate meetings for the Visiting Team with parents, students, and trustees, and administrators; review the School’s progress in providing the required documentation. (See Appendix H.)
6. At the Visiting Team training session: provide each Team member with a Team roster (supplied by AIMS) and schedules and location of accommodations for the visit; distribute subcommittee assignments and be certain each Team member will read his/her assigned sections of the Self–Study Report in advance of the visit and will arrive prepared with a draft introduction for his/her section(s) and draft recommendations and commendations. *Advance preparation is essential to the work of the Team.*
7. Be certain every teacher is observed at least once.
8. The team must observe at least one unannounced fire drill and pick-up and drop-off procedures.
9. Be certain every Standard is reviewed for compliance: the Chair indicates Section A compliance by initialing each; Section B compliance is also indicated by initialing, but only after the entire Visiting Team has voted on each. The original is given to AIMS and a copy to the School.
11. Collect and send to the School the completed Visiting Team expense vouchers.
12. Before departing, meet with the Head of School to summarize the visit, and to notify the Head of any recommendations by the Visiting Team that may adversely affect the School’s accreditation status, especially any determination that the School has failed to meet one or more Standards. The Chair should also meet with the School’s faculty to thank them for their hard work and hospitality and to summarize next steps in the

process. The Chair should not share Visiting Team observations or conclusions at this meeting.

13. Submit the Accreditation Visiting Team's Report, School audit, Standards Checklist, and the evaluation form of each Accreditation Visiting Team member to AIMS.
14. Appear before the Accreditation Committee during its review of the Accreditation Visiting Team Report. The Committee reviews the Report for 1) grammar and spelling; 2) internal consistency; and 3) compliance with the AIMS requirement that recommendations, except for those related to safety, are not prescriptive. The Committee will not substitute its judgment for the team's regarding substantive issues.

*The School has the following responsibilities:*

1. Assure the completion of the Self-Study Report before the Visiting Team training session.
2. Assure the submission and/or availability of all supporting documentation (see Appendix H).
3. Budget well in advance for estimated costs of the evaluation process (see Appendix B).
4. Provide appropriate overnight, single room, accommodations and group work space for Visiting Team members during the visit, including meals and transportation.
5. Provide a comfortable, private work/meeting space for Team members while on campus. This space must be off-limits to anyone other than Team members for the duration of the visit.
6. Provide Team members with an adequate number of appropriate computers, printers, and other necessary supplies.
7. Notify the faculty and administration that they will have a half hour meeting with the visiting team on Monday after school. The faculty should be arranged in groups of roughly 10, and the administration should be in a separate group.
8. Host a reception on the afternoon of Day 1 for the Visiting Team, faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, and selected parents.

*The Head of School has the following additional responsibilities:*

1. Meet with the Visiting Team Chair approximately four months prior to the visit and to provide him/her with a final audited financial statement for the School's prior fiscal year. (See Appendix I.)
2. Give two brief talks — at the Visiting Team training session and at the Day 1 reception — to welcome the Team, explain the School's philosophy, describe its history, organization, personnel, students, plant, and to any unique aspects of the School,

including curriculum and teaching methods. The Head should also summarize any themes disclosed by the Self–Study Report that the School wishes the Team to particularly note.

3. Arrange for a tour of the campus for the Visiting Team at its orientation session.
4. Assure that classes are in session and teachers do not give tests, quizzes, show movies, or take field trips during the duration of the Team visit. The Head should also notify the Visiting Team of any special class schedules or events, or of any classes that only meet on certain days.
5. Be certain that appropriate meetings are scheduled for Team members with parents, students, administrators, and trustees.
6. Free his/her calendar during the visit in order to meet with Team members and to assure that the process proceeds smoothly.

## **XI. The Accreditation Visiting Team Report**

### **(A) Substance and Style** (See Appendix G)

After review and approval by the entire Accreditation Visiting Team, the Report, including the completed Standards checklist, should be given to the Chair for final review before submission to AIMS. The Report should be carefully and concisely written, its tone constructive, yet honest in its appraisal of the School's strengths and weaknesses.

The Report must include sufficient factual information (size School, grades covered, number of times each class meets per week, etc.) to be meaningful to the AIMS Accreditation Committee.

*In writing the Report, the Visiting Team should observe the following guidelines.*

1. No reference may be made to individuals or small groups of teachers or School staff, whether to make commendations or recommendations.
2. The Report should make commendations (cite strengths beyond the expected) and recommendations (weaknesses that need attention) for each section of the self-study.
3. Prescriptive recommendations may not be made, except where 1) the Team uncovers health or safety concerns; 2) the School fails a Standard; or 3) the Team adopts a recommendation made in the School's self-study.
4. The Visiting Team Report may make no reference to the likelihood of accreditation.
5. All subcommittee Reports should be shared with and approved by the entire Visiting Team. While unanimity is preferred, in case of disagreement, a majority of the Team must agree. In such cases, the final Report must note the lack of unanimous agreement.

*The Report should be formatted in Times New Roman, 12 point type, as follows:*



The final Report, a composite of the Reports of the Visiting Team members and representing the point of view of the whole Visiting Team, should follow the general outline of the Self-Study Guide. It should begin with the dates of the visit, the names of Team members and the Schools they represent, followed by, on a single page, an introduction by the Chair, including a brief history of the School, its enrollment, grades evaluated, physical plant description, etc. A copy of the School's statement of philosophy should be attached prominently, at the beginning of the Report.

Each section of the Accreditation Visiting Team's Report should be formatted as follows:

GENERAL STATEMENT

This statement is to give an overview of the section being evaluated. There needs to be enough detail to be clear to someone unfamiliar with the School but be kept to no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs. The information should include the courses taught in the department or area of learning, any that are required for graduation, the number of teachers assigned, full-time and part-time, the length of time that the class is taught each day and how many days per week. For self-contained classrooms this information could perhaps be covered in another way. Try to keep the description to half a page.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

The second paragraph should briefly compare the Team's observations while on the visit to the School's overview in the self-study and similarities and differences should be noted. Since a major purpose of the visit is to verify and validate the Self-Study Report, it is important that, in addition to the first paragraph, which is an overview often drawn from the Self-Study, that the Team compare and contrast its own experiences and observations while on campus. This paragraph should also give a brief explanation for any prescriptive recommendations, included those related to failed Standards.

The Committee **commends** the School for:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The Committee **recommends** that the School (except in the Governance Section, where School is replaced with Board):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The Report should end with a concluding section, written by the Chair, summarizing the major findings of the Visiting Team and its major recommendations. Undoubtedly, the Report will contain many recommendations. This is the Chair's opportunity to direct the School's attention to themes that have emerged, those recommendations that stand out as especially important, including any safety concerns.

The Chair should return the final Accreditation Visiting Team Report promptly to the AIMS office as a hard copy with all the disks, or the Chair may arrange to send the entire Report to the Executive Director as an e-mail attachment.

## HOW TO HANDLE DIVERSITY QUESTIONS

Beginning with the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, the AIMS Evaluation Guide includes questions throughout the Self-Study Guide that probe a School's commitment to diversity and its daily practice in this area. These questions are intentionally embedded in each subsection of the Guide in order to reflect the fact that diversity practice, to be successful, should be an organic part of every area of School life. This approach, however, means that the School's diversity practice as a whole is more difficult to assess. For this reason, the diversity questions found throughout the Guide are listed in Appendix K – as a way to help the Visiting Team to focus on this area, to assess School diversity practice, and, if appropriate, to make diversity commendations and recommendations.

### **XII. Distribution and Publicity**

Once approved by the Accreditation Committee, copies of the Visiting Team Report and cover letter will be sent to the Head of School and the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Head and Board Chair will make the full Report and cover letter available to the full faculty and all trustees. *The School may not, under any circumstances, quote from or paraphrase the Accreditation Visiting Team Report for public relations purposes, except in the following cases:* The School may publish the Report in its entirety; the School may publish each and every one of the Report commendations and recommendations; the School may publish the Summary at the end of the Report.

### **XIII. The Action Plan**

Three copies of the School's Action Plan are due in the AIMS Office one year from the date of the visit — October 1<sup>st</sup> for fall visits, March 1<sup>st</sup> for spring visits.

The purpose of the Action Plan is 1) to bring focus to the School's plans to implement the recommendations contained within the Accreditation Visiting Team Report; 2) to support the School's continuing self-improvement efforts; and 3) to serve as a guide or measuring stick for the five-year review.

#### **(A) Guidelines for Developing and Writing an Action Plan**

1. Work should begin upon the receipt of the Accreditation Visiting Team Report. The deadline for submitting the Action Plan is October 1st of the year following a fall visit or March 1st of the year following a spring visit.
2. The entire faculty and Board must receive a copy of the Accreditation Visiting Team Report. As with the self-study, preparation of the Action Plan should be inclusive of the faculty and Board and should proceed by consensus.

3. A steering committee should be appointed by the Head of School to coordinate the development of the Action Plan. This committee may be the steering committee that directed the School's self-study, or a new committee may be appointed.
4. The Action Plan must establish two to four School-wide goals that reflect major themes the School believes should receive the greatest attention in the future. These School-wide goals should represent a consensus of the faculty, trustees, and administration after a careful review of the Self-Study and Accreditation Visiting Team Report. A successful Action Plan and implementation of the School's goals will be based upon full faculty participation in the development of these goals.
5. The Action Plan should include the following elements:
  - a. A response to any specific requirement stated in the AIMS Accreditation Committee's cover letter, which is sent with the Accreditation Visiting Team Report, including demonstrating compliance with any Standards not passed during the visit;
  - b. *A description of the process used to develop the Action Plan: Who was involved?*
  - c. What methods were used? Who wrote each section? etc.
  - d. *The enumeration of two to four School-wide goals*, based upon an analysis of the Self-Study and Accreditation Team Reports. As to each School-wide goal the School should outline the action steps it plans to take:
    - i. What is to be done? Be specific about actions to be taken.
    - ii. Who will do it? Who has the responsibility to direct and undertake each action?
    - iii. When will it be done? A specific time frame should be outlined for each action.
  - e. In addition to the enumeration of the two to four School-wide goals, a response to each recommendation contained in the Accreditation Visiting Team Report must be included as follows:
    - i. Restate the entire recommendation and indicate if the School accepts or rejects the recommendation.
    - ii. As to each recommendation accepted, a statement that states a) that it has been completed, or if not, b) the details of future action, including tentative dates and the person responsible.
    - iii. For any recommendation rejected, a clear statement of the reasons. Recommendations related to failed Standards may not be rejected.

(B) Guidelines for Action Plan Review

1. The Chair of the AIMS Accreditation Committee will appoint two reviewers to study the Action Plan. One reviewer will be a member of the original Accreditation Visiting Team, if possible, preferably the Chair or Vice Chair, and the other will be a member of the Accreditation Committee. The Accreditation Committee may require the reviewers to visit the School as part of the Action Plan Review.
2. Three copies of the Action Plan must be sent to the AIMS Office, by October 1 for fall visits or March 1 for spring visits, in the year following the visit. The AIMS Office will make available to the reviewers the Action Plan Report and the Accreditation Visiting Team Report and, if needed, the Self-Study Report.
3. After the reviewers have read the Action Plan, they will consult with each other and may schedule a one-day campus visit to meet with appropriate members of the Board of Trustees, the administration, selected department heads and/or teachers, and the School's Action Plan Steering Committee. The School will pay travel, lunch, and substitute (if needed) expenses for the reviewers. After the visit, the reviewers will prepare a brief written report for presentation to the Accreditation Committee. The Report should address the following questions:
  - A. **Is the Action Plan an adequate response to the self-study and Accreditation Visiting Team Report?** Has the School made a good-faith response to the recommendations made in the Accreditation Visiting Team Report? An adequate response means that the School has established two to four School-wide goals or major themes. Does the Action Plan contain clearly defined goals and strategies for addressing each major theme and, if appropriate, each recommendation. Has the School demonstrated compliance with any Standards failed at the time of the visit? Have all safety concerns been addressed.
  - B. **Can the progress toward meeting each goal be checked?** Are the strategies detailed enough?
  - C. **Was the Action Plan process appropriately inclusive?** Do the goals and plans represent a consensus of the faculty, administration, and Board?
  - D. **Is the School serious about the Action Plan?** Has the School begun work on the goals of the Action Plan? Is the School's Action Plan realistic in relation to its resources?
  - E. **Did the School reject any recommendations?** If so, what were they and why were they rejected?
  - F. **Has the School demonstrated compliance with all Standards?**

One reviewer (typically the Accreditation Committee member) will present the Report to the AIMS Accreditation Committee, who will recommend accreditation or not to the AIMS Board. A copy of the Report will also be sent to the Head of School.

#### **XIV. Five-Year Progress Report**

##### **(A) Form of the Report**

Five years after the visit of the Accreditation Visiting Team (year eight of the accreditation cycle, see Procedures, p. 2) the School must submit to AIMS three copies of a written Five-Year Progress Report and a final audited financial statement for the prior fiscal year. The Head will also be asked to certify that audits have been completed for the prior five years. The Report is due October 1<sup>st</sup> for fall visits, and March 1<sup>st</sup> for spring visits.

Approximately one-year prior to the due date, the Head of School should appoint a Five-Year Progress Report Steering Committee, which should begin to reexamine the Accreditation Visiting Team Report and Action Plan. As with the self-study, the process to prepare the Five-Year Progress Report should be inclusive of the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees.

The Five-Year Progress Report should include the following elements:

1. A narrative overview of actions and accomplishments since the Action Plan. This summary should amplify rather than duplicate the responses to the recommendations. The Report should include the current status of School-wide goals established in the Action Plan.
2. Each of the recommendations found in the Visiting Team Report with the School's original response and a current update.
3. Report on fundamental changes in the School's grade level and procedures, see B below.
4. A description of the process used to arrive at the final Report and to prepare for the Five-Year Visit.
5. A statement by the Head of School that the School is in compliance with all Standards.

##### **(B) Fundamental Changes in School and School Procedures**

***For Schools that add no more than two grades between the 10-year Accreditation and the Five-Year Visit:***

Grades added should receive special attention in the Five-Year Report. The report should include the effect of the added grades on (1) enrollment, (2) financial stability, and (3) the mission of the School. Describe facilities, staffing, and curriculum for the new grades.

***For Schools that add a new division, (more than two grades), or make a substantial change in philosophy between the 10-Year Accreditation and the Five-Year Visit, the following will be completed.***

**NEW GRADES**

Grade	Year Added	Current Enrollment	Full Enrollment

1. If these new grades add a high School (or anticipate such), state graduation requirements.
2. Has any professional organization, i.e., Maryland State Board of Education, Middle States Association, etc. given approval to these grades? Explain.
3. What were the reasons for adding these grades?
4. What additions have been made to the faculty and staff to administer and teach these new grades? State in terms of full-time teacher equivalency and number of administrators involved in these grades.
5. Nature of Students in the New Grades
  - a. Is the composition of the students in these grades significantly different from students in the rest of the School in any of the following respects: gender, culture, race, ability, achievement, socio-economic background, special talents and interests, disabilities, parental education and occupation, etc.?
  - b. To what extent are students in the new grades supported by financial aid? Does this differ significantly from your all-School support percentage?
6. Program/Curriculum
  - a. Describe in schematic form the courses (“areas of learning”) offered at each new grade level.
  - b. Describe support services (library, computer, counseling, etc.) provided these grades.
  - c. What co-curricular (extra-curricular) opportunities are offered in these grades?
7. Describe the impact of these grades on the following:
  - a. Facilities. How are these grades housed?

- b. School budget. How has this expansion been financed? Are these grades an asset or a liability to the bottom line of your operating budget?
  - c. Academic standards.
  - d. Philosophy and mission.
8. What problems have you encountered in adding these grades?
9. What is the projected future (long-range plan) for these grades? Do you plan further expansion of the School? Explain.

(C) The Visit

A one-day visit, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, to the School will be made by a two-person Five-Year Review Team, appointed by AIMS — one team member will be from the original Accreditation Visiting Team, if possible, and the other member from the AIMS Accreditation Committee. The Five-Year Review Team will meet with appropriate members of the Board of Trustees, the administration, selected department heads and/or teachers, and the School's Five-Year Progress Report Steering Committee. The School will pay the following team member expenses: travel, lunch, substitute (if needed), and a fee to AIMS. The purpose of the visit will be to check the validity of the Five-Year Progress Report, in so far as possible, and to look for any major changes that may not have been reported.

The Review Team will be privy to the previous evaluation materials, including the Self-Study Report, if appropriate, the Accreditation Visiting Team Report, the Action Plan, and the Five-Year Progress Report.

The Review Team will write a brief Report summarizing the campus visit and commenting on the School's continuing seriousness of purpose relative to the accreditation process, the nature and effectiveness of its progress since the visit of the Accreditation Visiting Team, and the status of its plans for the future.

The Review Team Report will be distributed to the AIMS Accreditation Committee and to the Head of School.

(D) Accreditation Committee Review

After reviewing the Five-Year Review Team Report, the AIMS Accreditation Committee will determine whether any change in the School's accreditation status is warranted. If so, it will make an appropriate recommendation to the AIMS Board of Trustees. The School may pursue the appeal procedures outlined in Procedures, p. 4.

# **SELF-STUDY GUIDE**

## **Table of Contents**

I. PROCESS.....	1
II. PHILOSOPHY .....	2
III. GOVERNANCE .....	4
IV. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY.....	9
V. PROGRAM.....	18
VI. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION .....	22
VII. BOARDING & HOMESTAY.....	25
VIII. COUNSELING.....	30
IX. PERSONNEL .....	33
X. ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION .....	39
XI. HEALTH.....	41
XII. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS.....	44
XIII. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT.....	48
XIV. PLANT, SAFETY, AND TRANSPORTATION .....	50
XV. SUMMARY.....	53



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## I. PROCESS

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PREPARED BY:

HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. Write a description of the process followed to prepare the self-study. Include structure and composition of committees and subcommittees, frequency of meetings, how information was gathered, and an outline of the schedule the School followed.
2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School's Self-Study process based on the above.
3. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made to strengthen the process for the future?

### **Relevant Standards**

- 1.7 The School's AIMS written self-study report is produced by an appropriately inclusive process; is thoughtful, comprehensive, and transparent; and the quality of the report demonstrates the School's significant engagement in the process.*

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## II. PHILOSOPHY

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This section asks the School to reflect upon its statement of philosophy. A carefully written statement of philosophy is essential to the School's success at a number of levels: it is a powerful expression of the School's vision of education and its highest aspirations for its students; it serves as an operational guide for the work of the Board, administration, and faculty; and it forms the basis of the School's promises to students and parents. The statement of philosophy thus contains a most important set of standards — the School's own, which AIMS uses to help it assess a School's strengths and weaknesses, and to decide whether to confer accreditation. To gain accreditation, a School must demonstrate that its current practice is highly congruent with its statement of philosophy.

For the evaluation process, AIMS requires the School to comprehensively review its statement of philosophy and, if necessary, to revise it to conform to current practice. The statement of philosophy must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

AIMS also suggests, but does not require, that each School develop a Board-approved diversity statement — either a separate document or contained within the philosophy statement — in which the School clarifies its commitment and carefully defines diversity as understood in the School.

### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. The statement of philosophy.
- B. If surveys or questionnaires were used, please indicate and document.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. Describe the process by which the School's statement of philosophy was reviewed for this evaluation. What major issues, if any, were discussed? In reflecting on the philosophy statement, did the School do any outside research? If so, please describe. What changes, if any, were made to the statement? Why were those changes made?
2. How is the School's statement of philosophy presented clearly to all constituencies? How is the statement of philosophy used to educate new members of the community, including teachers, students, and parents?

3. If the School developed a diversity statement, please describe the process for its development.

#### SUMMARY OF SECTION

4. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on the answers above.
5. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made for future action?

#### ***Relevant Standards***

*1.1 The School has a mission statement. This statement is based on sound educational principles.\**

*1.2 There is a high degree of congruence between the stated mission of the School and the actual educational program of the School.*

*2.6 The Board periodically reviews and approves the School's mission statement.\**

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### III. GOVERNANCE

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It is essential to the evaluation process that Trustees reflect upon their own practice and procedures in their work for the School. This section asks the Board to review its work in its traditional areas of responsibility: Board/Head relations; financial oversight; policy development and strategic planning; and the development of Board procedures.

*This section must be completed by members of the Board of Trustees.* While the Head of School will provide essential support and advice, AIMS intends that Trustees use the questions below to think deeply about their role within the School community.

#### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. A list of members of the governing body, designating the officers and committee chair persons.
- B. A copy of the Articles of Incorporation, by-laws, and an IRS 501(C)(3) ruling or equivalent.
- C. The agenda for a recent Board meeting.
- D. A copy of the governing board's manual, if available.
- E. Minutes of the Board for the preceding year.
- F. A copy of the School's most recent strategic plan.
- G. A copy of the School's diversity statement, if it has one.
- H. A copy of the Board's conflict of interest policy.

#### PREPARED BY:

#### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

(A) ORGANIZATION

1. Describe the composition of the Board including length of term, background of members, method of selection, active sub-committees, officers, and frequency of meetings.
2. Please analyze the composition of the Board in terms of diversity. Does the Board include trustees from different racial and ethnic groups? Trustees who represent other diverse groups within the school community?

(B) ORIENTATION AND EDUCATION

3. How are Trustees oriented to the School and to their role as Trustees? What materials are made available to Board members and what ongoing education is provided to them? What diversity training has been provided to trustees? If not, please explain.
4. What provisions are made for keeping members of the Board abreast of concerns in the broad field of education as well as those of management of the School?
5. What are the responsibilities of the School's Trustees?

(C) BOARD/HEAD RELATIONS AND HEAD EVALUATION:

6. Describe the written contract the Board has with the Head: its length of term; delineation of responsibilities, including the responsibility of the Head for the appointment of employees; and the contract's non-renewal provision. Describe the relationship of the Head to committees of the Board.
7. Describe the evaluation process of the Head by the Board. How often? By whom? How are the conclusions communicated to the Head?

(D) STRATEGIC PLANNING:

8. Describe the responsibility of the Head and the Board for strategic or long-range planning. What process was followed to develop the most recent plan?
9. Describe how the School's strategic plan supports its commitment to diversity. What implementation steps has the Board taken to support the School's strategic diversity goals?

(E) BOARD PROCEDURES:

10. Describe procedures related to:
  - (a) Setting of the agenda for Board meetings.

- (b) Reports of committees and administrative staff to the Board.
  - (c) Alumni/ae, parent, faculty and student concerns.
  - (e) Communication of decisions to faculty, staff and the larger community.
  - (f) The raising and clearing of issues with the Head.
  - (g) How do members of the Board handle problems brought to them by alumni/ae, faculty, parents, staff or students? What are the procedures for receiving communications from these constituencies?
11. Please analyze minutes of Board meetings for the past three years. What issues has the Board spent the most time focused on? Do those issues include diversity issues? Has the Board spent sufficient time discussing, planning for, and taking steps to support diversity in the School? How has the Board's focus in the past three years been consistent with the School's statement of philosophy and its diversity statement (if it has one)?
  12. Describe where the Board's policies and procedures are written. How is the Board chair and officers selected?
  13. What is the policy of the Board relative to possible conflicts of interest between a Board member and his/her role as a Board member and his/her business or professional role?
  14. Describe the guidelines that separate and articulate the responsibilities of Trustees and the School administration and faculty.
  15. Describe the Board's oversight, and its effort to articulate the appropriate roles of the School's parent and alumni organizations.
  16. Describe the Board's position or policy on matters of diversity.
  17. How does the Board oversee the financial management of the School? In what ways does it assure that financial resources provide adequate support for the School's facilities and program?

(F) BOARD EVALUATION

18. Describe the procedures that the Board has in place to evaluate itself? How often does this occur and how effective has it been?
19. What do Trustees feel are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the School? ( If a survey took place, add any comments about this process, indicating the number of responses, range, etc. If no survey took place, state how this was assessed.)

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

20. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the Board based on A-F above.

21. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made for future action?

### **Relevant Standards**

*1.5 The School has a statement of nondiscrimination, in compliance with applicable laws, in its brochures and catalogues as well as in its charter, by-laws, or other governing instrument.\**

*1.6 The School is a member in good standing of the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools.\**

*2.1 The School, or its parent organization, is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and has been granted by the Internal Revenue Service 501 (C) (3) status or an equivalent form of tax exempt status.\**

*2.2 The School is sufficiently independent in governance, teaching, and learning, and financial management, to ensure the fulfillment of its mission.*

*2.3 The Board of Trustees (Governors, Directors) develops major school policies, oversees financial management, thinks & plans strategically, and employs, supports, and annually evaluates the Head.*

*2.4 The Board provides a written contract for the Head of School, which sets forth major responsibilities, the general plan for the Head's evaluation, salary and benefits, the term of employment, and the required termination notice.\**

*2.5 The School demonstrates appropriate and effective boundaries between the policy-making role of the Board and the role of the Head of School as the manager of the day-to-day operations.*

*2.6 The Board periodically reviews and approves the School's mission statement.\**

*2.7 There is a long-range or strategic plan, which is annually reviewed and updated through a process that includes a review of relevant research and trends, and strategic challenges and opportunities.*

*2.8 The Board provides the resources necessary to assure a high quality educational program and the adequacy of plant facilities.*

*2.9 The Board's policies and procedures are clearly identified, stated in writing, and organized in a usable manner, filed at the School, and disseminated to those affected.\**

*2.10 The Board provides orientation for its new members and supports a process for the evaluation of its own organization and effectiveness.\**

*2.11 The Board develops policies, within the context of the School's mission, to promote diversity, including gender, economic and racial equality, in its governance and administration, admissions, staffing, and educational programs.*

*11.1 The School demonstrates the institutional capacity and resources necessary to remain financially viable for a minimum period of three years.*

*11.2 There are appropriate procedures and resources for management of the School's finances, including budget making, accounting and control, and strategic thinking and planning.*

*11.3 The School clearly states its tuition and fee structure and it has a written policy for refunds.*

*11.4 The School maintains adequate property and liability insurance.\**



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## IV. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

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DOCUMENTATION: Complete charts as indicated and attach the following documents: (A) copies of any surveys used; (B) representative materials used in the admission process; and (C) a report showing the School's financial assistance/need-based and merit scholarships for the past 5 years.

PREPARED BY:

HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

(A) HISTORY AND CULTURE

In this subsection, the School is asked to think carefully about its history and culture. In reflecting on culture, an elusive concept, the School may find useful the following definition, found in the Evaluation Guide for the New York State Association of Independent Schools:

“The culture of the School, or its identity, is the collective and intended way of living and working that shapes the hopes and behavior of all members of the School's community and identifies the School to all outside of its community.”

1. Briefly describe the history of the School, including any significant changes affecting the course of its history.
2. Describe and analyze the School's culture. How has the School's culture evolved over time? What changes have significantly affected the School's culture? How does the School's culture relate to the times in which we live?
3. How is the School's culture congruent with its stated philosophy? This response should synthesize the information about School culture provided above with the School's responses about philosophy provided in other sections of the Instrument.

(B) STUDENTS

4. Please complete Chart I below, using enrollments as of opening of School. If the School is ungraded, use reasonable equivalents. Explain any unusual variations in enrollments and capacity. What conclusions can be drawn from the data?

**CHART I**

**STUDENT ENROLLMENT, CAPACITY AND STABILITY**

Grades Included In This School	PAST						PRESENT			PROJECTED					
	Three Years Ago			One Year Ago			This Year			Next Year			Three Years Hence		
	Years _____			Years _____			Years _____			Years _____			Years _____		
	Number Enrolled	Capacity	Number of New Students	Number Enrolled	Capacity	Number of New Students	Number Enrolled	Capacity	Number of New Students	Number Enrolled	Capacity	Number of New Students	Number Enrolled	Capacity	Number of New Students
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															
Grade _____															

**CHART II**

**COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY**

GROUP	Percent of Student Body Now	Percent of Student Body 3 Years Ago	Percent of Student Body 6 Years Ago	Percent of Student Body 9 Years Ago
African American				
Asian American				
Latino/Hispanic				
Middle Eastern				
Multiracial				
Native American				
Foreign National (Not US Citizen)				
Other (specify)				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

5. Please complete Chart II above, analyze the data, and answer the following questions. For Schools that define diversity to include groups in addition to racial/ethnic classifications, please feel free to construct a chart that reflects this diversity.
- (a) Describe the School's philosophy regarding ethnic and racial diversity.
  - (b) Describe any significant changes in the ethnic composition of the student body in recent years. Describe and discuss any unusual circumstances.
  - (c) Describe the composition of the student body in ways that are meaningful to your School. How does the composition of the School's population reflect the School's stated mission?
  - (d) How does the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body compare to that of the local community?
  - (e) Describe the School's efforts to achieve and maintain a diverse student body.
6. What are the arrangements for the orientation of new students?

7. Describe the relationship of students to teachers and administrators. What avenues exist for interchange of ideas and information?
8. Given the composition of the student body, how does the School meet the needs of all groups? Is the School more successful meeting the needs of any one group? If so, why?
9. Describe any ways that students are involved in issues and decision-making for the School (e.g. student government) and for their own activities (e.g. teams, clubs, and co-curricular activities).
10. What do students feel are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the School? If a formal survey took place, attach a copy of the form with comments. If no survey was used, state how the information was gathered.

**CHART III**

**WITHDRAWALS**

Reason for Withdrawal	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Boys	Girls	Total
Change of Residence																
Finance																
Transportation																
Academic Difficulty																
Discipline Problem																
Unknown																
Other - Specify																

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

11. What proactive steps has the School taken to recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse student body? What programming is in place to support the needs of diverse students? Please provide examples. Are there student affinity groups?

12. Please complete Chart III, above, using data for the 12 months preceding the opening of the current School year. Do not include students who graduated from the last grade. Using the data, answer the following:
- (a) Describe any significant changes.
  - (b) What are the implications of the present composition and/or changes?
  - (c) Describe exit interview procedures (if any) used by the School.
  - (d) Describe the School's enrollment/retention strategies.
  - (e) What is the attrition rate among racially and ethnically diverse students over the past five years?

(C) ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

13. Describe the structure and process used for recruiting and admission. Who is responsible? What outside individuals or groups, if any, do you use to assist you in your recruitment and admission efforts? Provide copies of representative materials used in the admission process. Explain how these serve the School's broad purposes. Describe policies, criteria, procedures and practices for accepting applicants to the School including preferential treatment, if any, in the admission process (e.g. alumni, donors, students of color, siblings, athletes, special talents, staff children, etc.). Include procedures used to determine whether or not the School is equipped to meet the needs of the applicant.
14. Describe the contents of a typical candidate admission folder. What disposition is made of items in folders of non-matriculating or rejected candidates?
15. What financial assistance is available for students at each level of the School? Describe your financial assistance policies for new and returning students. How is the amount determined and by whom? Does the School offer awards other than for demonstrated need? Provide a report which covers your financial assistance/need based and merit scholarship awards and tuition remission (sources and amounts by division and in total) for the past 5 years.
16. What steps does the School take to assure the confidentiality of financial aid awards? Who has access to this information? Who sits on the financial aid committee?
17. Please complete Chart IV, below. How has the School's admission funnel data changed over time? Using the data, please describe the School's major strengths and weaknesses in its efforts to attract, select, and matriculate qualified applicants.

**CHART IV**

**ADMISSION FUNNEL**

Year	Inquiries	Visits	Applications	Acceptances	Newly Enrolled
Current Year					
One Year Ago					
Two Years Ago					
Three Years Ago					
Four Years Ago					

18. What qualities or characteristics attract students and their families to your School? How have you gathered this information?
19. What are the reasons admitted students do not enroll in your School?
20. How is the admission office involved in the School's efforts to retain students?

(D) PARENTS

This subsection should be used by the School to analyze and reflect upon the many aspects of its relationship with parents. The School will want to summarize the many ways in which parents are supportive and also honestly explore any weaknesses and areas of concern. Although some Schools may wish to survey parent opinions, the focus of this subsection should be on the perspective of the educators — teachers and administrators — for whom constructive working relationships with parents is essential to their success with students.

21. Describe how parents are involved in the life of the School.
22. In what ways are parents informed about the School's diversity goals? How are parents involved in supporting diversity at the School?
23. In what ways are diverse families supported?
24. Analyze the School's formal and informal relationship with its parents. Please address the following questions and any others the School deems relevant: In what ways do the School's enrollment contract, Student/Parent Handbook, and other formal School documents structure the relationship, including the rights and obligations of parents within the School community? What are the limits of parent involvement and decision-making? How are those limits communicated to parents? Does the School have a clearly stated and understood parent grievance procedure?

25. Describe and analyze the School's Parents Association, if one exists. How does it support the School's mission? Its faculty? Its administration? How are decisions made regarding the use of funds raised by the Parents Association? Are Parents Association finances audited each year by the School's accounting firm? Analyze the Parents Association by—laws in terms of its mission, nominating process, and relationship to the School's Board of trustees and administration. Do the Parents Association and its leadership reflect the diversity of the School? Consistent with the School's overall diversity, are Parents Association meetings and events designed to be appropriate for people of different socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds?
26. What are the strengths of the School's relationship with its parents? What are the weaknesses? How might the relationship be strengthened in the future?

(E) ALUMNI, EXTENDED FAMILY, AND FRIENDS

This subsection should be used by the School to analyze and reflect upon the many aspects of its relationship with alumni, extended family, and friends. The School will want to summarize the many ways in which these groups support the School and also honestly explore any weaknesses and areas of concern.

27. Do alumni support and/or participate in the life of the School? If so, in what way and to what effect?
28. Does alumni leadership reflect the diversity of the School? What efforts are in place to involve racially and ethnically diverse alumni?
29. Describe those resources, if any, that serve the alumni (e.g. use of facilities, special recognition, etc.)
30. Does the School maintain an alumni database? If so, how is it used? Comment on how the School gathers and circulates alumni news.
31. If the School has an Alumni Association, describe and analyze its activities and role within the School community. How do its activities support the School's philosophy? How are decisions made regarding the use of funds raised by the Alumni Association? Are Alumni Association finances audited each year by the School's auditing firm? How does the Association relate, governmentally, to the School's Board of Trustees and administration? Are the Association's meetings and events appropriate for people of different socio-economic, racial, and cultural backgrounds?
32. In what ways are extended family and friends involved in the life of the School and in support of its students? How does the student body benefit from such involvement? How do the individual extended family and friends benefit? In what ways does the School benefit as an institution?
33. What are the strengths of the School's relationships with alumni, extended family and friends? What are the weaknesses? How might these relationships be strengthened in the future?

(F) THE SCHOOL WITHIN ITS LARGER COMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

This subsection asks the School to define and describe the larger community within which it functions and, further, how its use of, and service to that community furthers the School's purposes and objectives. "Larger community" may be defined here as the area within which the School has a perceptible effect. It may be limited to a neighborhood or a single municipality; it may extend beyond an urban-suburban complex to a state, region, or even the world.

Occasionally, the interests of the School will diverge from those of a part of the larger community. In preparing this subsection Schools may consider including students, parents and members of the larger community in discussions of this topic.

34. What is the community within which the School has a perceptible effect and which in turn has a perceptible effect on the School?
35. What are the interactions of the School community with outside agencies and institutions?
36. Does the School have a commitment to being a good neighbor? What does that mean in practical terms?
37. What has the School done to create a positive relationship with the larger community and how effective have these efforts been? A School may want to cite examples that illustrate effective relationships. If tensions have existed around building, expansion or other changes between the School and community, the School may wish to describe the circumstances and the steps taken to ameliorate the difficulties.
38. How does the School interact with the broader community in such areas as education or government? For example, do individuals representing the School belong or have membership on local, state or federal advisory bodies that may affect policymaking; and procedures by which the School provides direct input into the state and federal legislative and regulatory processes. Who is responsible for such initiatives?
39. Describe the relationship with local public and private Schools. To what associations – local, state, national or international - does your School belong?
40. In terms of the School's own definition of its larger community, what does it mean for the School to be located where it is? What does it mean to the community to have the School there? To what extent do the purposes of the School take the community into account and, conversely, to what extent has the community shaped the purposes and objectives of the School? What is the effectiveness of the interaction between the School and the community? How specifically do the students and the School use their community?
41. List the areas of change that should be considered.

SUMMARY OF SECTION

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this subsection was drawn from the Evaluation Guide for the New York State Association of Independent Schools. AIMS is grateful for their permission to use this material.



42. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of School and Community based on items A-F.
43. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

**Relevant Standards**

- 1.4 The School adheres to the AIMS Code of Ethics (See Appendix J).*
- 3.1 The School's culture is highly congruent with its stated mission.*
- 3.2 The composition of the School's student body closely reflects its mission statement.*
- 3.3 The School clearly and effectively communicates to its parents its mission, school climate and culture, and admission and financial assistance standards, policies and practices.*
- 11.6 The School's admission and financial assistance policies and practices are effective and consistent with the School's mission statement.*

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## V. PROGRAM

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In this section, the School is asked to reflect on its program. "Program" is defined as all activities planned or supervised by the adults in the School (for example, academics, athletics, art, service, library, field trips, and much more). In other words, the term "program" is intended to include what educators have called the "curriculum" and the "co-curriculum" and "extra-curriculum." By using the term "program," AIMS asks Schools to think holistically about their students' experiences. This approach also means that the library or media or technology is included in the program; they do not have separate sections in this evaluative instrument.

AIMS hopes that this process inspires the School to shape its thinking about its program. The presentation should be thorough and clear.

### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. The program of the School. The program should be available to the Accreditation Visiting Committee as early in the process as possible and no later than the four week visit. (See "Design" below for specific directions).
- B. School profile (secondary Schools only).
- C. Graduation requirements.
- D. For Schools prior to the secondary level, or Schools with divisions in addition to secondary, provide a list of courses taught, frequency and duration of meetings.
- E. Provide examples of multicultural materials and events, including texts, assemblies, speakers, summer readings, and any faculty and student diversity training.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED ( PROCESS):

#### (A) DESIGN

1. Please present the School's program in a way that is clear, concise, and consistent with the goals of the School's philosophy. Your method must include in it 1) an explanation of how students gain a sequential acquisition of skills and content; 2) a demonstration of sound educational principles and practice; 3), and a programmatic explanation of the length of the

School day and the number of days in the School year; 4) a demonstration of the ways in which the program is highly congruent with the diversity statement, if the School has one. Discuss your plans for this presentation in advance with the AIMS office. You may choose among the following:

- (a) By School division and discipline (lower, middle, upper School; English, math, athletics, service, etc.) For a School's first AIMS self-study, this approach is strongly recommended.
  - (b) By a curriculum map that inventories content, skills, and assessment practices in all aspects of the program.
  - (c) By areas of student growth and development. Some Schools have focused on such developmental areas as multiple intelligences.
  - (d) By outcome based performances that focus on desired outcomes, and performances, and goals for improvement.
  - (e) By asking questions the School itself might wish to contemplate: "What are the characteristics we want our graduates to exhibit?" "What is quality education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" "What are the pedagogues of the School and its assessment practices, and what is the relative weight given to the varying approaches?"
  - (f) By a global and thematic approach, focusing, for example, on the peoples of the world, the societies in which they live, the problems they must solve to flourish, and the environment in which they live.
  - (g) By any other methodology and structure appropriate to your School, as long as it is discussed in advance with the AIMS Executive Directors.
2. After you have presented your program according to the above guidelines, please evaluate its strengths and weaknesses *by School division and discipline.*

(B) PHILOSOPHY

3. Please highlight the essential program goals of the School's statement of philosophy and give a short overview of the School's efforts to make this philosophy come alive in its students. At the conclusion of this section, the School will be asked to make an argument for a high degree of congruence between its statement of philosophy and its program.

(C) PROCESS

4. Please reflect upon the process by which programmatic decisions are made by answering the following questions. The values implicit in the School's philosophy also should be apparent in the programmatic decision-making process for both the adults and the students.
- (a) Briefly, what is the process by which major programmatic decisions are made?
  - (b) How does the School gather evidence to support its decisions?

- (c) How frequently are decisions re-evaluated?
  - (d) What role do faculty members play in the decision-making? Administrators?  
Students?
  - (e) How are new materials chosen?
  - (f) How does this process reflect the organizational pattern of the School?
  - (g) How does the process reflect the governing principles inherent in the School philosophy?
5. After answering these questions, please evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this process.

(D) TEACHING AND LEARNING

6. Please provide answers to the following questions for all divisions and levels of the School. If these questions are answered in previous tasks you have completed, please refer the AIMS committee to the relevant paragraphs.
- (a) How does the faculty respond to a variety of learning styles in the classroom?
  - (b) Explain the reasoning for the use of learning groups or tracks in the School.
  - (c) How are learning objectives made clear and understandable to students?
  - (d) How does the faculty accommodate the learning needs of special students?
  - (e) What kinds of student assessment practices are used?
  - (f) How are standardized tests used?
  - (g) How does the School ensure there are a variety of pedagogical styles?
  - (h) How is the School's pedagogy consistent with its stated philosophy?
  - (i) How has the School created a cohesive and coherent approach to content?
  - (j) How does the School build cumulative skills in its students?
  - (k) What role does class size play in the School's learning objectives?
  - (l) In what ways does the School provide faculty development in these areas?
  - (m) How does the School encourage freedom of inquiry and the teaching of critical thinking skills and independent thinking.
  - (n) Please analyze how the program reflects the School's commitment to diversity by answering the following questions:
    - Has the School provided teachers with any form of diversity training? Do teacher evaluation procedures and professional development opportunities encourage and support teachers in this area?
    - Is diversity an organic and intentional part of curriculum planning and development?
    - Are different cultures represented across the curriculum?
    - Can every child see him/herself in the curriculum?
7. After reflecting upon these key issues of teaching and learning, please assess program strengths and weaknesses as they relate to these issues.

(E) CONGRUENCE BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM

8. Using the evidence gathered from the previous parts of this section, please make an argument, in a brief essay, for your School's success at creating a program that is highly congruent with the School's statement of philosophy and a diversity statement, if the School has one.

### SUMMARY OF SECTION

9. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the School's program based upon items B–E.
10. What suggestions can be made for future action?

### ***Relevant Standards***

*1.3 The School strives for excellence in its program, learning, and teaching.*

*4.1 The School day and School year are carefully planned and are of sufficient duration to provide for the total educational program of the School.*

*4.2 The educational program adequately provides for the individual capabilities, learning styles, and significant needs of the students currently enrolled in the School.*

*4.3 The School encourages freedom of inquiry and the teaching of critical reasoning and independent thinking.*

*4.4 The School's pedagogy is highly congruent with its stated mission.*

*4.5 The School's educational program is highly congruent with the School's stated mission.*

*4.6 The school provides evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for the collection and use in school decision-making of data (internal and external) about student learning. There is also evidence of a thoughtful assessment of individual student progress consistent with the school's mission.*

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## VI. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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This section should be completed by any School having grades below first. However, if the school's early childhood program is documented as part of the overall program in Section V, then please contact the AIMS office to determine if this section needs to be completed.

### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. Childcare license issued by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care or for District of Columbia Schools, a license from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education;
- B. faculty and parent handbooks;
- C. assessment instruments; and
- D. materials related to a 12-month program, if offered.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED: PROCESS:

1. How does the Early Childhood Program implement the School's philosophy?
2. Describe the admission process and orientation of parents and children.
3. Is continued enrollment guaranteed?
4. What are the School's policies permitting the School to terminate enrollment (when it becomes clear the School does not have the resources to meet the individual needs of the child).
5. Describe how the program encourages cooperative relationships with parents:
  - (a) through parental involvement;
  - (b) through ongoing communication with the assessment of children;

- (c) through efforts to promote home-based activities to support children; and
  - (d) by taking into account the varying circumstances of the families in the School.
6. Describe the staffing in the Early Childhood Program.
- (a) What are the responsibilities of the individual(s) directing the program? How is this person supervised? How does the program director communicate with the School's overall administration?
  - (b) Describe the standards or procedures used in selecting, orienting, training, supervising and evaluating faculty and staff? What are the expectations or programs supporting professional development?
  - (c) Describe any distinctions made between persons working in the program and other members of the faculty. Do teachers, and assistant teachers attend faculty meetings? Do they serve on committees or task forces for the entire School? Are there differences in the length of the work day or work year, compensation/benefits etc. If differences exist, please describe and explain.
7. Present a chart listing each individual in the program who has primary responsibility for a grouping, indicating (a) the individual, (b) the grouping (c) the designated size of the group, and (d) the current size of the group.
8. Describe the School's curricular and extra-curricular program.
9. How does the program address the intellectual and developmental needs of children including the variety of activities facilitated through the outdoor environment?
10. Describe all grouping of children as well as the curricular goals and expectations for each age-level group of children. Indicate for each group how the program objectives are supported by:
- (a) the organization of the day and the 12 month calendar if applicable.
  - (b) the physical environment, instructional materials, media and technology.
  - (c) support and ancillary services, nurse, food service, and janitorial.
  - (d) communication between curricular and extra curricular programs.
11. Describe all policies or provisions that protect the health and safety of all the children. What adaptations have been made to the physical environment?

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

12. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the Early Childhood Program based on the answers above.
13. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

### **Relevant Standards**

*5.1 The School's early childhood program meets the needs of its students.*



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## VII. BOARDING & HOMESTAY

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DOCUMENTATION: See numbers 7 and 8 below.

PREPARED BY:

HOW PREPARED: PROCESS

(A) BOARDING STAFF

1. Describe the process for selecting and assigning boarding staff.
2. What orientation and training is provided for boarding staff?
3. How are boarding staff supervised and evaluated?
4. Describe the workload of boarding staff, both in and out of the dormitory. How does the School address the choices faculty may need to make in prioritizing dormitory and other duties?
5. Describe how dormitory staff access and communicate with advisors, counseling resources, and health services concerning boarding students.
6. What provision is made for faculty to request to move out of the dormitory? What incentives are given to encourage faculty to stay in the dormitory?
7. Provide a chart showing adult boarding coverage for a seven day period.
8. Provide a list showing the years of boarding experience of all dorm parents.

9. What provisions are made to take care of the health needs of boarding students?

(B) BOARDING CURRICULUM.

10. Describe the boarding curriculum. What does the School want students to learn through boarding life?

11. How does the program help students to learn about themselves and about working with others?

12. What leadership opportunities are available to students? How are students trained to assume leadership?

13. How does the School support students as they address issues of sexuality?

14. What are the School's policies concerning substance abuse? What educational programs are provided for students?

15. What opportunities do students have to attend religious services?

16. Describe the system for formal and informal communications with parents concerning the experience of students in the boarding program.

(C) BOARDING/DAY INTEGRATION

17. How are non-boarding faculty involved in the boarding program for students?

18. For Schools with day/boarding or boarding/day programs:

(a) How does the School approach the two constituencies? Is there one norm for both or separate norms?

(b) How are day students integrated into the boarding program?

(c) What is the policy regarding student (day or boarding) use of automobiles on campus? When off campus?

(d) What rules apply when boarding students visit day students in their homes? Is there

an expectation of adult presence?

(e) How are boarding life rules communicated to day students and day parents?

(D) EVENING, WEEKEND, AND VACATION ACTIVITIES

19. Describe social events and special programs which are offered.
20. What is the availability of academic facilities on evenings and weekends?
21. How are “short breaks” handled for students who are unable to go home?
22. How does the School provide for the needs of international students and students receiving financial aid?
23. Describe the supports which are in place for international students.
24. What provision is made for travel to and from home?
25. What provision is made to permit students on financial aid to take part fully in all aspects of the program, including “extra fee” activities?

**HOMESTAY**

Homestay students refer to enrolled international students who reside off campus with host families and not with parents (or other relatives) or guardians.

(E) GENERAL INFORMATION

26. How many homestay students are enrolled in the school?
27. What are their native countries?
28. What tuition does the school charge for these students? How does tuition for these students compare to day student tuition at comparable grade level?
29. What percentage of total enrollment is comprised of homestay students?

## (F) FINANCIAL/ LEGAL

30. What are the contractual arrangements:
- Between the school and the students' families.
  - Between the school and US host families?
  - Is a third-party involved? If so, who is it and what contractual agreements are in place?
  - Who at the school assures compliance with federal immigration laws?
  - Who controls issuance of I-20s? The school or the agent, if there is one?
31. How has the school covered potential liability related to the enrollment of homestay students?
- For injury to homestay students while off campus with host families? Are they required to have minimum levels of auto and home liability coverage? What are those minimums?
  - For health insurance for these students?
  - For any liability to the school growing out of negligence or intentional misconduct by the host family?
32. What arrangements are in place to guide the school's relationship with host families:
- How are families chosen? Is there a screening process?
  - Does the school have formal written expectations of student host families?
  - How does the school assess on an ongoing basis the appropriateness of match between an international student and host family? In what ways and how often does the school communicate with host families throughout the year?
  - By whom are host families compensated? How much?
33. For schools where homestay students comprise more than 10% of total enrollment *and* those students come from only one foreign country, what financial contingency plans are in place were that source of students to significantly diminish or dry up?

## (G) ADMISSIONS

34. How and by whom are homestay students recruited to the school?
35. What admission process does the school follow for international students? How does it assess each student's match with the school, academically and socially/emotionally? How does the school assess English language ability in each international student?
36. What percentage of total student enrollment is represented by homestay students?
37. Has the school established an upper limit for the percentage of homestay students it will accept? If so, please explain the rationale.

38. What tuition and fees are paid by homestay students? How do these compare to tuition and fees for domestic students?
39. What is the school's policy regarding financial aid for homestay students?

(H) ACADEMIC

40. How are course placement decisions made, especially for students who need ESL?
41. What academic support is available to international students? Have staff been specially trained to understand and address the needs of international students?
42. Does the school teach ESL? Is an ESL curriculum in place?

(I) STUDENT LIFE

43. Is counseling support available to homestay students? If so, have counselors been specially trained to understand and address the needs of these students?
44. How are students helped to understand the school's culture? How are they integrated into the social life of the school?
45. In what ways has the school's culture been affected by homestay students?

SUMMARY OF SECTION

46. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on items A-I.
47. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

**Relevant standard**

*6.1 The School's boarding and/or homestay program(s) meet(s) the needs of its students and is highly congruent with its stated mission.*

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## VIII. COUNSELING

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### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. Appropriate supportive materials.
- B. Standardized test results.
- C. School profile (secondary Schools only).

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

#### (A) ACADEMIC

1. Describe the School's academic counseling and support procedures for students. Differentiate groups and ages as appropriate.
2. What is done if a student experiences academic difficulty or needs enrichment?
3. Describe how a student's educational program is developed. Who works with the student and approves the program? How do the student, his/her parents, and faculty participate in the planning?
4. How do the professional staff and faculty members, not directly involved in the counseling-advising process for a given student, learn of her/his special academic needs?
5. Describe the School's policies for promotion and retention. Under what circumstances is a student not offered re-enrollment? What are the procedures and policies?
6. How is student academic progress measured? What standardized tests are given? What use does the School make of the results of these tests for the purpose of academic counseling?
7. What use is made of any other group and individual assessments? How are results shared and used by the individual student, parents, and faculty?

(B) SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

8. Describe the School's counseling program goals for social and emotional development across grade levels. This answer should include any provisions the School has made for: new student orientation; conflict management; development of interpersonal skills; how the School addresses issues of sexuality and substance abuse
9. Does the School employ a psychologist or similar resource? Describe procedures for involvement and the extent of services provided.
10. What is done if a student experiences emotional difficulty? What resources outside the School are used to support students academically, socially and emotionally?
11. What is the School's policy regarding the confidentiality and dissemination of counseling information about students?

(C) BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

12. What is the School's philosophy regarding discipline?
13. Describe the School's policies and procedures relative to a student's behavior.
14. How are students and parents made aware of policies and rules regarding behavior?
15. Describe the School's policies, if any, regarding the student's behavior at off campus activities sponsored and not sponsored by the School.

(D) FUTURE EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING

16. Describe how the School assists students and parents in making decisions regarding his/her future educational/career plans beyond graduation. How do the students, parents, and faculty resource people participate?
17. For secondary Schools, describe procedures and preparation for college entrance examinations.
18. Secondary Schools should describe staffing and procedures for the college counseling and application process.

(E) SCHOOL RECORDS

19. Describe the contents of a student's current cumulative record file. Where are these files located? Who has access to them? What guidelines for access are provided? Who is responsible for maintenance of these records?
20. How is confidential material handled?

21. What materials remain in the file after the student leaves the School?
22. How are the files physically secured against fire, misplacement, loss, or unauthorized access?

### SUMMARY OF SECTION

23. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on A-E above.
24. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

### ***Relevant Standards***

- 7.1 The School provides an appropriate counseling program that includes academic, social and emotional counseling, and future educational placement.*
- 7.2 Rules, regulations, and discipline for students are stated clearly and highly congruent with its stated mission.\**
- 7.3 The policies and practices for student behavior and discipline conform to a reasonable standard of fairness and review.*



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## IX. PERSONNEL

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All information will be kept strictly confidential. The School should remember that no individual is evaluated in this process, and the 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.

### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. Faculty salary scale or range.
- B. Faculty benefits description.
- C. Sample written agreement for the employment of teachers.
- D. Job descriptions of administrators.
- E. Other job descriptions, if available.
- F. Criminal background check letters (Maryland Schools only).

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

#### (A) POLICIES

1. Using the chart below, respond to the following statements regarding the School's policies. The School is asked to answer yes or no. Whenever an answer is affirmative, please attach a statement that specifically tells where relevant documentation can be found. A written explanation of a no answer should be attached.

	School	Visiting Team
1. The School employs qualified personnel without regard to race, color, ethnic background, or national origin.		
2. Salaries and benefits are administered in a clearly articulated manner for:		
teaching faculty		
non-teaching staff		
administrators		
3. There is a clearly stated retirement plan.		
4. There is a stated and understood policy on sick days.		
5. There is a stated and understood policy on personal days.		
6. There is a stated and understood policy on sabbaticals.		
7. There is a stated and understood family leave policy.		
8. Additional employment policies are clearly stated.		
9. There is an understood, written policy for the regular evaluation of faculty and administrators.		
10. There is an understood policy for non-renewal and termination of employment.		
11. There is a professional development program.		
12. There is an orientation program for new faculty.		
13. There is an on-going mentoring program for new faculty.		
14. There is a clearly stated non-harassment policy.		

(B) BENEFITS

2. Describe the benefits offered and any variations among employee groups. Attach documentation.
3. What benchmarks does the School use to set its benefits program? How does the benefit package compare to these benchmarks? What aspects of the package would the School like to enhance?

(C) PERSONNEL

4. Present an organizational chart representing the functional relationship among the Board of Trustees, the School head, the division heads, other administrators, department chairpersons, teachers, and others.
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the communication between and among administrators?
6. Provide comprehensive written job descriptions of the roles of:
  - (a) Administrators.
  - (b) Others, including faculty, if available.
7. How is the School's non-academic staffing plan formulated and revised? What staff changes have occurred over the past five years? What is the rationale for these changes? What changes are planned for the future? Why are these changes contemplated?
8. Is the School's administrative staff sufficient in number to meet the administrative needs of the School as expressed in the School's philosophy and objectives?
9. Does the administrative staff reflect the diversity within the greater School community? What efforts have been made to hire people of color to fill administrative positions?
10. Please describe how the School performs due diligence by investigating the backgrounds of prospective employees. In addition to fingerprinting, what other methods does the School use to be as certain as possible that prospective employees are highly qualified and appropriate to supervise students?

(D) FACULTY PROFILES

11. Attach the Faculty: Count, Salaries, and Benefits survey the School completed for AIMS for the current year or the School may create a similar form that best describes the School.
12. Please provide the data requested below.

GENDER (%)

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

AGE (%)

\_\_\_\_\_ 20-25 year olds

\_\_\_\_\_ 26-35 year olds

\_\_\_\_\_ 36-45 year olds

\_\_\_\_\_ 46-55 year olds

\_\_\_\_\_ 56-65 year olds

\_\_\_\_\_ over 65

Average age of faculty \_\_\_\_\_

ACADEMIC PREPARATION (%)

\_\_\_\_\_ No Degree

\_\_\_\_\_ A.A.

\_\_\_\_\_ B.S. or B.A.

\_\_\_\_\_ B.S. or B.A. +

\_\_\_\_\_ M.S., M.A. or MED.

\_\_\_\_\_ M.S., M.A., or MED. +

\_\_\_\_\_ Ph.D., Ed.D, J.D., or equivalent

ETHNIC AND RACIAL COMPOSITION (%)

\_\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_\_ Latino/Hispanic American

\_\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ Middle Eastern American

- \_\_\_\_\_ Multiracial American
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pacific Islander American
- \_\_\_\_\_ International
- \_\_\_\_\_ All other individuals (these are all individuals NOT INCLUDED ABOVE)

13. Describe significant changes in the composition of the faculty in the last five years.
14. Analyze the composition of the faculty in light of the School's philosophy, diversity goals, diversity statement, if it has one, and the needs of its students.
15. Describe how the School would like the composition of the faculty to be different and how the School plans to effect these changes.

(E) FACULTY SALARIES

16. For each of the last five years, please list the average percentage increase and the range of the percentage increase in faculty salaries.
17. Describe the School's system for determining faculty salaries and the annual increases.
18. Explain the rationale for this system. Analyze its strengths and weaknesses in light of the School's mission and operational needs.
19. What benchmarks does the School use to set faculty salaries?
20. What salary goals does the Board of Trustees have for the faculty and administration?

SUMMARY OF SECTION

21. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based A-E above.
22. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

**Relevant Standards**

- 8.1 *The administration is organized in a manner enabling it to effectively implement the policies of the Board.*
- 8.2 *The administration initiates adequate procedures for review of the School's organization, administration, facilities, and the determination of short- and long-range goals.*
- 8.3 *Each member of the faculty and staff is clearly informed of his/ her compensation, term of employment, and principal responsibilities\**

*8.4 There is an understood policy for the non-renewal and termination of employment.*

*8.5 The School has fair and appropriate personnel policies, salaries, and benefits for faculty and staff.*

*8.6 The ratio of students to teachers is consistent with the School's mission, educational program, and strategic objectives.*

*8.7 The School conducts adequate background checks for all employees before the first day of employment (including DC Schools).\**

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## X. ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

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### DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

- A. Written policy for the evaluation of faculty and administration.
- B. Evidence of the implementation of the written policy of evaluation.
- C. Samples of typical faculty meeting agendas.
- D. Supporting documents as called for.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. Is the School's faculty sufficient in number to meet the teaching needs of the School as expressed in the School's philosophy and objectives? Please be specific about student-faculty ratios, section sizes, teaching loads, and number of preparations.
2. Describe the evaluation process for faculty and administrators. Attach forms if used.
3. Describe the rationale for the design of the School's evaluation system.
4. Describe and evaluate the School's implementation of this process.
5. List and describe in-service and staff development activities and participation in professional organizations. Are any trends or themes evident? Describe any professional development initiatives that the School has particularly emphasized.
6. How is the effectiveness of the professional development program evaluated?
7. Describe the procedure for regular faculty/staff meetings. Who prepares the agenda? Who presides? Attach a copy of a typical faculty meeting agenda.
8. What is the faculty committee structure in the School? How can it be strengthened?

9. Indicate the percentage of turnover (by division and for the entire School) in the instructional staff for each of the past five years. Indicate any trends or patterns in faculty attrition that the School has noted over the past five years.
10. Describe the faculty recruitment process. If diversity is a goal, describe strategies targeted to recruiting people of color.
11. Describe the steps, if any, the School takes to identify faculty perceptions and attitudes.
12. Describe how program decisions are made and implemented in the School. How is this process consistent with the philosophy and culture of the School? Assess the effectiveness of this process. How might it be strengthened?
13. How do administrators stay informed of broad developments and activities relative to their own areas of responsibility?
14. How do administrators stay informed of developments and activities relative to other parts of the School that bear on their own areas of responsibility?
15. Please describe the efforts of the administration to accomplishing the School's diversity goals. For example, how is the Head involved in diversity issues and in what specific ways does he/she support this area? How much time do other administrators spend on diversity issues?

#### SUMMARY OF SECTION

16. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based upon the answers above.
17. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made for future action?

#### **Relevant Standards**

- 1.4 *The School adheres to the AIMS Code of Ethics (See Appendix J).*
- 1.5 *The School has a statement of nondiscrimination in compliance with applicable laws, in its brochures and catalogues as well as in its charter, by-laws, or other governing instrument.\**
- 4.7 *The faculty and administration engages in ongoing professional growth and stays informed about research and trends relevant to pedagogy, curriculum planning and development, and the needs of students currently enrolled in the School.*
- 4.8 *The administration is responsible for all policies affecting programs, personnel and facilities.*
- 4.9 *There is an understood written policy for the regular evaluation of faculty and administration.*
- 4.10 *The written evaluation policy is routinely and effectively implemented.*
- 4.11 *The School has an understood and effective professional development program.*
- 11.8 *Administrators responsible for admission, financial aid, marketing, finance, and advancement stay informed about research and trends relevant to their areas of responsibility.*



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## XI. HEALTH

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### DOCUMENTATION:

- A. Health forms.
- B. Immunization forms.
- C. Emergency Information sheets.
- D. Medical Release.
- E. First Aid Procedures.
- F. School's Health policies and procedures.
- G. Medication policies.
- H. Policy to comply with medication assistant training (for Maryland Schools).
- I. Special health problems list.
- J. Bloodborne Pathogen Plan.
- K. Medical Emergency Plan.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. How does the provision of health services reflect the School's philosophy?
2. How does the School define its responsibility for the provision of health services?

3. Who is responsible for providing health care during the School day? What are that person's qualifications? Please attach a copy of that person's job description. Who supervises those responsible for providing health services?
4. What facilities are available for health services? Are they adequate for the student body? Are they accessible?
5. Is there a budget for health services? Is it adequate?
6. How is the School prepared to handle a medical emergency? Please include answers to the following:
  - (a) How are injuries or medical emergencies handled at the School?
  - (b) Does the School have a plan for the reporting of accidents/injuries? To whom are reports of accidents/injuries communicated?
  - (c) Is emergency information/medical release available for all students? Is it accessible to authorized personnel?
  - (d) Provide a list of personnel qualified to administer first aid. Who provides their training?
  - (e) Are emergency supplies/first aid kits readily available? Where are they located?
  - (f) Does the individual responsible for providing health services analyze the Crisis Management Plan as it pertains to medical/health issues?
7. What are the School's policies regarding medications?
8. Who is responsible for administering medications? If non-medical personnel administer medications, provide documentation that state certification regulations have been fulfilled.
9. How are medications and emergency supplies stored?
10. How is medication administration documented?
11. If a boarding School, who is responsible for administering medications after regular School hours?
12. What health information is required from students annually?
13. How does the School store student health information?
14. How is health care documented?

15. Does the School maintain a list of special health concerns for students? How are student health concerns communicated to faculty and administration?
16. How does the School provide for the prevention and care of athletic injuries? Who is responsible for the care of athletic injuries? What are that person's qualifications? What are that person's duties?
17. How does the School address the health education needs of its students? Describe the health curriculum. Who is responsible for teaching? Describe any School-sponsored health/wellness programs for students or staff.
18. What is the rationale for the School's choices of food service? Does the School have a plan for students with severe food allergies? For boarding Schools, describe the food services available to students.
19. Indicate below what periodic health screenings are administered? By whom?

	<u>Y/N</u>	<u>Person Responsible</u>
Hearing	_____	_____
Vision	_____	_____
Speech	_____	_____
Lice	_____	_____
Other, specify	_____	_____

20. What are the School's policies with regard to serious or communicable illness?

**SUMMARY OF SECTION**

21. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on above answers.
22. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

**Relevant standards**

- 10.1 The School provides appropriate and effective health services to its students.*
- 10.2 The School is in compliance with all applicable laws governing the distribution of student medications.*
- 10.3 School personnel stay informed about, and implement, as appropriate, policies and procedures based upon, the latest research regarding student health issues.*

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## XII. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

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All information will be held in strict confidence. For purposes of this report, “independent” audit is one performed by a certified public account not otherwise employed by the School and not serving on the Board of Trustees.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

- (A) Independent audit and footnotes for the prior five fiscal years, including management letters, if any.
- (B) Current operating, division and capital budgets.
- (C) Most recent financial report including income statement and balance sheet including all funds.
- (D) Recent operating reports prepared for the Head of School and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees.
- (E) Three year financial plan.

PREPARED BY:

HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

(A) FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

1. Please respond specifically to each of the following items with a “Yes” or “No”. Be prepared with supportive evidence of each “Yes” answer and provide a written explanation for each “No” answer.
  - (a) Business and tax records (e.g. 990, 5500, ERISA, COBRA) are well kept and available. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) The School has an audited annual financial report that presents clearly and accurately the financial health of the School and is available to designated persons. \_\_\_\_\_

- (c) The School has appropriate procedures for the management of its financial resources including:
  - (i) Budget making. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) Accounting for all funds of the School. \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) Long-range financial planning. \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) The Head, Board of Trustees, and Heads of Divisions are kept fully informed about their financial areas of responsibility. \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) Sufficient property and liability insurance is maintained. \_\_\_\_\_
- (f) Information relating to the financial responsibilities of the parent/guardian to the School is stated clearly in writing and is made available prior to enrollment. \_\_\_\_\_
- (g) The School offers an equitable tuition refund insurance plan or has a procedure for the adjustment of parent/guardian financial obligations. \_\_\_\_\_

(B) REVENUE AND EXPENSE

2. In order to analyze historic financial trends, please complete the following two charts. The School may create its own charts using major categories of income and expense as appropriate for the School. Comment on any significant changes in these items: Were they planned? Were they desirable? If not, what plans does the School have to correct the problem?

Revenue	Previous Year		5 Years Ago	
	\$ (000)	% Total	\$ (000)	% Total
Tuition				
Gifts				
Endowment Income				
Auxiliary Activities				
Other				
Total				

Expense	Previous Year		5 Years Ago	
	\$ (000)	% Total	\$ (000)	% Total
Instructional Salaries and Benefits				
Instructional Supplies and Expense				
Auxiliary Activities				
Financial Aid				
Faculty Development				
Technology Costs				
Plant Operating Costs				
Other salaries and Benefits				
General and Administrative Expense				
Depreciation				
Other				
Total				

3. Describe the staff organization for the financial management of the School. What office facilities do they have and are they appropriately equipped? What provisions are made for bonding or fraud insurance against misappropriation of School funds?
4. Describe the procedures for developing the operating budgets for the divisions and School as a whole. Who is involved? Who establishes the priorities and makes the ultimate judgments? How often is the budget reviewed?
5. Describe the relationship between those responsible administratively for financial management (e.g. the Business Office) and those exercising corporate responsibility (e.g. the Finance Committee of the Board).
6. Describe the policies and procedures for collection of past due accounts.
7. If the School has endowment funds, who is responsible for the investment management of the funds? How often is the performance reviewed? Who reviews the selection of investment managers and how frequently? How are the expenditures of restricted funds monitored?
8. What are the policies for the School to take income from the endowment and other sources such as Annual Giving? Who sets those policies?
9. How much and what kind of federal, state, or local government funds does the School receive?
10. What summer, evening, weekend, or between-term use is made of the School facilities? Are there formal rental agreements? Describe the provisions for obtaining property and liability insurance coverage. Describe any Unrelated Business Income Tax implications.
11. Summarize the School's property and liability insurance coverage.

12. Describe the provisions for funding additions and replacement of capital assets.
13. Describe and assess effectiveness of the School's cash management.
14. Describe the procedures for evaluating and purchasing employee benefits.
15. Describe the procedures for evaluating and responding to regulatory requirements and changes (e.g. COBRA, ERISA, ADA, Family and Medical Leave Act).
16. Are the financial resources of the School adequate to meet the needs of the School's philosophy? What are long-range plans to provide for financial health of the School?
17. What institutional financial resources has the School committed to support diversity? Are these resources adequate to implement the School's diversity goals?
18. Describe the School's institutional capability (staff and systems) and resources (real and projected assets) that assure financial viability for a minimum of three years.

#### SUMMARY OF SECTION

19. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on the answers above.
20. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

#### **Relevant Standards**

- 11.1 *The School demonstrates the institutional capacity and resources necessary to remain financially viable for a minimum period of three years.*
- 11.2 *There are appropriate procedures and resources for management of the School's finances including budget making, accounting and control and strategic thinking and planning.*
- 11.3 *The School clearly states its tuition and fee structure and it has a written policy for refunds.*
- 11.4 *The School maintains property and liability insurance.\**
- 11.5 *The School undergoes an annual audit by an independent auditing firm in compliance with GAAP standards*

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### XIII. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

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#### DOCUMENTATION:

- (A) Materials created for the annual fund, special projects and a capital campaign, if in progress.
- (B) Provide copies of marketing materials (publications, newsletters, annual reports if available, etc) disseminated to various constituencies (alumni, parents, community, and media) for public relations or admission purposes.
- (C) Prepare a chart depicting the last five years of fund raising (annual fund, capital campaign, special projects, and foundation grants, including parent or alumni fund raising). The chart should indicate the total funds received in each of the last 5 years exclusive of all other revenue.

#### PREPARED BY:

#### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. Describe the strategic goals and objectives of the Development Office and how they support the School's philosophy.
2. Describe the relationship between the Development Office, Head of School and the Board of Trustees.
3. Describe the relationship between the Development Office and the Business Office.
4. Describe the staffing and organization of the various fund raising efforts.
5. Provide information on budgets allocated for various marketing and fund raising purposes?
6. How are fund raising priorities determined? For what purposes are the funds being raised?
7. What percentage of the annual fund supports the current operating budget of the School?
8. Is the School seeking capital funds at this time? For what purposes?



9. Is there a long-range or strategic development plan? How was it formulated? By whom? How often is the plan reviewed? By whom?
10. Describe the procedures, if any, for developing, approving, and managing planned giving arrangements ( e.g. Pooled Income Funds and Charitable Remainder Trusts).
11. Describe the purpose and organization of the School archives, if any.
12. Based on the information provided what are the development trends of the School?
13. How accurately do the School's publications communicate the diversity goals of the School?

#### SUMMARY OF SECTION

1. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School based on the answers to the above.
2. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

#### **Relevant Standards**

*11.7 The School has an effective development, public relations, and marketing program to further its program and objectives.*

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## XIV. PLANT, SAFETY, AND TRANSPORTATION

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### DOCUMENTATION:

- (A) Fire drill procedures.
- (B) Log of fire drills for the preceding year.
- (C) Record of fire marshal visits
- (D) Evacuation plans.
- (E) Building floor plans and campus map.
- (F) Crisis management plan.

### PREPARED BY:

### HOW PREPARED (PROCESS)

#### (A) PLANT

1. Prepare a brief evaluation of each building and facility on the campus. Items to be addressed include adequacy, condition, cleanliness, furnishings, environment (light, heat, ventilation, etc.) safety, and security as appropriate. Facilities should include such areas as classroom buildings, athletic facilities (buildings and fields), administrative spaces, cafeterias, theaters, dormitories, maintenance facilities, roads, walkways, and parking. If there are deficiencies, what plans does the School have for addressing the problems?

#### (B) TRANSPORTATION

2. Indicate below approximately what percentage of students use each mode of transportation to and from School.

School Operated Buses        \_\_\_\_\_%

Public Transportation        \_\_\_\_\_%

Walk or Ride Bicycles \_\_\_\_\_%

Private Automobiles \_\_\_\_\_%

Contracted Buses \_\_\_\_\_%

3. Does the School operate transportation vehicles? What size and type are they? Are they well maintained? Do they meet all safety regulations? Are all drivers appropriately licensed? Are driving records for all drivers checked for past serious violations? What training is required and given to all drivers?
4. What is the School's policy regarding parents driving children to activities and events?

(C) SAFETY

5. Are fire drill instructions posted in each classroom? How often has the School conducted unannounced fire drills in the past 12 months?
6. What communications methods are used to seek assistance and transmit emergency information (e.g. public address, cell phones, pagers, two-way radios, e-mail, and website)?
7. What other specific safety measures have been taken by the School?
8. What security measures are provided for the campus and individual buildings (e.g. security guards, restricted building access, employee identification, visitors badges, campus lighting)?
9. Describe security procedures at the School for after School hours, weekends and specifically related to a boarding program, if offered.
10. Do the School's practices concerning behavior and general well being ensure the safety of the student body? What is the School's practice regarding permission to go on trips?
11. Describe the School's procedures for handling hazardous materials such as laboratory and industrial chemicals.
12. Describe the procedures for regular review of risk management policies.
13. Describe the procedures for review of and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements (such as asbestos, ADA, underground oil tanks, lead in water, fire inspections).
14. Describe the School's practice regarding traffic safety on and adjacent to the campus.
15. Describe the School's practice regarding dismissal of students during the School day.

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

16. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the School's plant, safety, and transportation procedures and practices based on A-C.
17. Based on these findings, what suggestions can be made for future action?

### ***Relevant Standards***

- 12.1 The School's facilities are well maintained and consistent with its stated mission.*
- 12.2 The School has in place and routinely and consistently implements policies and procedures to provide for the safety of students and faculty.*
- 12.3 The School has in place and routinely and consistently implements policies and procedures to protect all electronic personal identity.*

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## XV. SUMMARY

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PREPARED BY:

HOW PREPARED (PROCESS):

1. Write a summary of the major themes that have emerged from the School's self-study. Please highlight those areas for improvement that the School believes are the most important. As with other sections of the self-study, this summary must represent a consensus of opinion.



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

### **AIMS Accreditation Standards**

*The team chair should place a 'P' beside each passed standard or a 'NP' beside each failed standard*

*Schools may demonstrate compliance with standards shown with an asterisk (\*) at the Design Conference, following completion of Phase One of the self-study; compliance with all others standards is evaluated by the Visiting Team during its visit.*

#### **General**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.1 The School has a mission statement. This statement is based on sound educational principles.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.2 There is a high degree of congruence between the stated mission of the School and the actual educational program of the School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.3 The School strives for excellence in its educational program, learning, and teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.4 The School adheres to the AIMS Code of Ethics. (See Appendix J.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.5 The School has a statement of nondiscrimination, in compliance with applicable laws, in its brochures and catalogues as well as in its charter, by-laws, or other governing instrument.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.6 The School is a member in good standing of the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.7 The School's AIMS written self-study report is produced by an appropriately inclusive process; is thoughtful, comprehensive, and transparent; and the quality of the report demonstrates the School's significant engagement in the process.

#### **Governance**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.1 The School, or its parent organization, is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and has been granted by the Internal Revenue Service 501 (C)(3) status or an equivalent form of tax exempt status.\*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.2 The School is sufficiently independent in governance, teaching and learning, and financial management, to ensure the fulfillment of its mission.<sup>1</sup>
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.3 The Board of Trustees (Governors, Directors) develops major school policies, oversees financial management, thinks and plans strategically, and employs, supports and annually evaluates the Head of School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.4 The Board provides a written contract for the Head of School, which sets forth major responsibilities, the general plan for the Head’s evaluation, salary and benefits, the term of employment, and the required termination notice.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.5 Trustees demonstrate appropriate and effective boundaries between the policy-making role of the Board and the role of the Head of School as the manager of the day-to-day operations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.6 The Board periodically reviews and approves the School’s mission statement.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.7 There is a long–range or strategic plan, which is annually reviewed and appropriately updated through a process that includes a review of relevant research and trends, and strategic challenges and opportunities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.8 The Board provides the resources necessary to assure a high quality educational program and the adequacy of plant facilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.9 The Board’s policies and procedures are clearly identified, stated in writing, and organized in a usable manner, filed at the School, and disseminated to those affected.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.10 The Board provides orientation for its new members and supports a process for the evaluation of its own organization and effectiveness.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2.11 The Board develops policies, within the context of the School’s mission, to promote diversity, including gender, economic and racial equality, in its governance and administration, admissions, staffing and educational programs.

**School and Community**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3.1 The School’s culture is highly congruent with its stated mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3.2 The composition of the School’s student body closely reflects its mission statement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3.3 The School clearly and effectively communicates to its parents its mission, school climate and culture, and admission and financial assistance standards, policies and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> To assess compliance with this standard, AIMS looks at both formal and functional indicators. Formal indicators include written documentation, including by-laws and other governing documents. Functional indicators include long-established organizational practices that establish independence in fact, if not in writing.

### **Teaching & Learning**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.1 The School day and school year are carefully planned and are of sufficient duration to provide for the total educational program of the School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.2 The educational program adequately provides for the individual capabilities, learning styles, and significant needs of the students currently enrolled in the School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.3 The School encourages freedom of inquiry and the teaching of critical reasoning and independent thinking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.4 The School's pedagogy is highly congruent with its stated mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.5 The School's educational program is highly congruent with the School's stated mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.6 The school provides evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for the collection and use in school decision-making of data (internal and external) about student learning. There is also evidence of a thoughtful assessment of individual student progress consistent with the school's mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.7 The faculty and administration engages in ongoing professional growth and stays informed about research and trends relevant to pedagogy, curriculum planning and development, and the needs of students currently enrolled in the School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.8 The administration is responsible for all policies affecting programs, personnel and facilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.9 There is an understood written policy for the regular evaluation of faculty and administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.10 The written evaluation policy is routinely and effectively implemented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4.11 The School has an understood and effective professional development program.

### **School Climate (Edition 7.0 only)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5.1 The School's climate is highly congruent with its stated mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5.2 The School has in place and routinely and consistently implements policies and procedures regarding harassment, sexual abuse, and bullying awareness and prevention, including employee education and training.

### **Boarding and Homestay**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6.1 The School's boarding and/ or homestay program(s) meet(s) the needs of its students and is highly congruent with its stated mission.



### **Counseling**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7.1 The School provides an appropriate counseling program that includes academic, social, and emotional counseling, and future educational placement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7.2 Rules, regulations, and discipline for students are clearly stated and highly congruent with its stated mission.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7.3 The policies and practices for student behavior and discipline conform to a reasonable standard of fairness and review.

### **Personnel**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.1 The administration is organized in a manner enabling it to effectively implement the policies of the Board.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.2 The administration initiates adequate procedures for review of the School's organization, administration, facilities, and the determination of short- and long-range goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.3 Each member of the faculty and staff is clearly informed of his/her compensation, term of employment, and principal responsibilities.\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.4 There is an understood policy for the non-renewal and termination of employment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.5 The School has fair and appropriate personnel policies, salaries, and benefits for faculty and staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.6 The ratio of students to teachers is consistent with the School's stated mission, educational program, and strategic objectives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8.7 The School conducts adequate background checks for all employees before the first day of employment (including DC Schools).\*

### **Health**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10.1 The School provides appropriate and effective health services to its students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10.2 The School is in compliance with all applicable laws governing the distribution of student medications.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10.3 School personnel stay informed about, and implement, as appropriate, policies and procedures based upon, the latest research regarding student health issues.

### **Financial Management**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11.1 The School demonstrates the institutional capacity and resources necessary to remain financially viable for a minimum period of three years.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.2 There are appropriate procedures and resources for management of the School's finances including budget making, accounting and control, and strategic thinking and planning.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.3 The School clearly states its tuition and fee structure and it has a written policy for refunds.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.4 The School maintains adequate property and liability insurance.\*

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.5 The School undergoes an annual audit by an independent auditing firm in compliance with GAAP standards.

**Admission**

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.6 The School's admission and financial assistance policies and practices are effective and consistent with the School's mission statement.

**Institutional Advancement**

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.7 The School has an effective development, public relations and marketing program to further its program and objectives.

**Financial Sustainability**

\_\_\_\_\_ 11.8 Administrators responsible for admission, financial aid, marketing, finance, and advancement stay informed about research and trends relevant to their areas of responsibility.

**Plant, Institutional Technology, Safety, and Transportation**

\_\_\_\_\_ 12.1 The School's facilities are well maintained and consistent with its stated mission.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12.2 The School has in place and routinely and consistently implements policies and procedures to provide for the safety of students and faculty.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12.3 The School has in place and routinely and consistently implements policies and procedures to protect all electronic personal identity.

**Name of School** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Team Chair)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



**LOCAL STANDARDS**  
**for schools in**  
**Maryland**

*The team chair should place a 'P' beside each passed standard or a 'NP' beside each failed standard*

**COMAR 13A.09.09**

**.01. Purpose and Scope**

\_\_\_\_\_ B&C A school has been issued a Certificate of Approval (or an exemption, if a religious school).

**.03. Certificate of Approval**

\_\_\_\_\_ D A school shall operate in a manner which is consistent with the specifications as recorded on the Certificate of Approval.

\_\_\_\_\_ E The school shall post the Certificate of Approval in a conspicuous place on the premises to which it applies.

**.04. Compliance**

\_\_\_\_\_ C The school shall certify the status of the compliance of the school with this chapter (.04) by submitting the completed annual report provided by the Department.

\_\_\_\_\_ H A school shall certify on the form provided by the Department that it does not practice discrimination based upon race, color, or national origin.

\_\_\_\_\_ I A school shall certify that it is in compliance with the requirements for a criminal background check as specified in Family Law Article, Title 5, and Education Article 2-206.1, Annotated Code of Maryland.

\_\_\_\_\_ J A school shall certify that it is in compliance with the requirements for reporting suspected child abuse as specified in Family Law Article, Title 5, Annotated Code of Maryland.

### **.05 Statement of Purposes**

\_\_\_\_\_ A school shall have a written statement of its purposes, which shall be given annually to the parent(s), or legal guardian(s) of the students enrolled.

### **.06. Personnel Requirements**

\_\_\_\_\_ A.1 A school shall have an administrative head who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school.

\_\_\_\_\_ A.2 An administrative head hired after June 1, 2004, at a minimum shall meet the standards established in (06.B.2.a)

\_\_\_\_\_ A.3 A school shall have a written position description that states the duties and responsibilities of the administrative head of the school.

\_\_\_\_\_ A.4 The administrative head of a school shall have sufficient time during each school day to carry out the duties and responsibilities in the written position description.

\_\_\_\_\_ B.2.a A teacher who provides instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, courses for which secondary school credit is granted, and Montessori areas of instruction shall hold, at a minimum one of the following credentials:

- (i) a bachelor's degree from an IHE;
- (ii) 120 semester hours of college credit from an IHE; or
- (iii) a bachelor's degree equivalent as determined by an independent agency authorized to evaluate foreign credentials that is designated by the Department.

\_\_\_\_\_ B.2.b A teacher in a Montessori school shall also hold a Montessori teacher credential appropriate for the level of assignment.

\_\_\_\_\_ C.2 A school shall give annually to the parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students its written statement of the qualifications of each teacher who implements the educational program.

### **.07. Educational Program**

\_\_\_\_\_ A.1 The educational program of a school shall operate consistently with its statement of purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_ A.2 A school shall maintain at the school a written curriculum of its educational program for the following areas of instruction: English, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies for kindergarten and each grade; secondary school courses for which credit is issued; and Montessori areas of instruction.

\_\_\_\_\_ B A school shall maintain at the school instructional materials and equipment

required to implement the written curriculum of the school. A school shall own the instructional materials and equipment required to implement the curriculum.

- \_\_\_\_\_ C A school shall maintain at the school and own a library media collection to support and supplement the implementation of the written curriculum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D A school shall have a written statement of its ratio of students to teachers or its average class size for the implementation of its educational program. This statement shall be given annually to parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students.

#### **.08. Student Records for Nursery Schools, Kindergartens, and Elementary Schools**

- \_\_\_\_\_ B A school shall maintain a cumulative record for each student enrolled that includes the following:
  - (.1) School name;
  - (.2) Address;
  - (.3) Phone number;
  - (.4) Student's first, middle, and last names;
  - (.5) Student's date of birth;
  - (.6) Student's home address;
  - (.7) Month, day, and year the student initially entered;
  - (.8) Nursery school level or grade upon enrollment;
  - (.9) Month, day, and year the student withdrew;
  - (.10) Student's performance information in each curricular area;
  - (.11) Code for the meaning of performance information; and
  - (.12) Number of days in attendance in each school year.

#### **.09. Requirements for Secondary Schools**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A Beginning with the 2004-05 school year and thereafter, a student entering grade 9 shall earn a minimum of 21 credits for secondary school graduation.

Twelve credits shall be required as follows:

- (.2.a) Four credits in English language arts;
  - (.2.b) Two credits in social studies to include at least one credit in United States History;
  - (.2.c) Six credits in science and mathematics to include at least two science credits and two mathematics credits.
  - (.3) Nine additional credits shall be earned in accordance with the school's written policy regarding graduation requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B A secondary school shall have a written policy regarding the credits required for secondary school graduation. This policy shall be given to parents or legal guardians of the student enrolled.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ C A secondary school shall have a written statement that defines a unit of

credit. This statement shall be given to parents or legal guardians of the students enrolled.

- \_\_\_\_\_ D.1 A secondary school shall be prepared to present as a separate document a transcript of the secondary school record of each student for each year of enrollment that includes the following:
  - (.a) School name,
  - (.b) address,
  - (.c) phone number;
  - (.d) Student's first, middle, and last names;
  - (.e) Student's date of birth;
  - (.f) Student's home address;
  - (.g) Credits and grades earned in each subject area;
  - (.h) Code for the meaning of the grading system;
  - (.i) Designation of transfer credits accepted by the secondary school and name of the school originally granting the credit;
  - (.j) Month, day, and year student initially entered;
  - (.k) grade upon enrollment;
  - (.l) Month, day, and year student withdrew or graduated; and
  - (.m) Number of days of attendance in each school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D.2 A secondary school shall maintain permanently the original or a legible copy of the secondary school transcript of each student who has been enrolled in the school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E A secondary school's diploma may not imply that the requirements for graduation from a Maryland public secondary school have been met.

#### **.10. Administrative Practices**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A.1 A school shall have a written schedule that states the beginning and end of the school day and the specific time periods during the school day when required areas of instruction are implemented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A.2 A school shall give annually to parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students the written schedule of its school day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B.1 A school shall have a written calendar that states the specific days and the total number of days for the implementation of its educational program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B.2 The calendar for a kindergarten, elementary school, or secondary school shall provide for at least 170 days for the implementation of the educational program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B.3 When a student enrolls and annually thereafter, a school shall give its written school calendar to parents or legal guardians of each student.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B.4 A school shall include three to five additional school days, based on local

weather patterns, in its school year calendar to ensure that the 170 day school year requirement is met.

- \_\_\_\_\_ C.2 A school shall have a written policy regarding the criteria for admission to the school, which shall be given to parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ C.3.c A school may adopt policies and procedures permitting a 4-year old to be admitted to kindergarten, upon request by the parent or guardian, if the school determines that the child demonstrates capabilities warranting early admission.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ D The public relations information of a school shall be accurate and may not be erroneous or misleading, either by actual statement, omission, or reasonable inference.

**.11. Health, Fire and Safety, and Zoning**

- \_\_\_\_\_ A.1 A school shall be in compliance with health, fire safety, and zoning regulations applicable to a nonpublic school.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ A.2 A school shall obtain and maintain documentation verifying compliance with health, fire safety, and zoning regulations applicable to nonpublic schools.

**Name of School** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Head of School)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Team Chair)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



**LOCAL STANDARDS**  
**for schools in the**  
**District of Columbia**

*The team chair should place a 'P' beside each passed standard or a 'NP' beside each failed standard*

**SAFETY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The school has been issued all certifications required of nonpublic schools by state and local government.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The school complies with health, fire safety, and zoning regulations applicable to nonpublic schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The school maintains documentation verifying compliance with health, fire safety, and zoning regulations applicable to nonpublic schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The school provides evidence that it complies with the DC Human Rights Law, as applicable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The school conducts criminal background checks for all employees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The school has a procedure for reporting suspected child abuse.

**PUBLIC TRUST**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The school has a mission statement, which is provided to parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of prospective and enrolled students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The school provides annually to the parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students the educational background of all teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Public information provided by the school accurately reflects the school's mission and program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The school has a written policy clearly stating the requirements for admission to the school. This statement is provided to parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students.



## EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A teacher who provides instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, courses for which secondary school credit is granted, and Montessori areas of instruction shall hold, at a minimum one of the following: (i) a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university; or (ii) 120 semester hours of college credit from an accredited college or university; or (iii) experience that qualifies the person to provide quality instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A secondary school has a written policy regarding the credits required for secondary school graduation. This policy is provided to parents or legal guardians of enrolled students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. A secondary school has a written statement that defines a unit of credit. This statement is provided to parents or legal guardians of enrolled students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The school maintains an academic calendar that provides at least 170 days for the implementation of the educational program. This calendar is provided annually to parents or legal guardians of enrolled students.

## RECORDS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The school maintains a cumulative record for each student enrolled that includes the following:
- (1) School name, address, and phone number;
  - (2) Student's first, middle, and last names;
  - (3) Student's date of birth;
  - (4) Student's home address;
  - (5) Month, day, and year the student initially entered;
  - (6) Nursery school level or grade upon enrollment;
  - (7) Month, day, and year the student withdrew; or graduated
  - (8) Number of days in attendance in each school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The school maintains a record for each student's performance in every curricular area. A secondary school shall maintain permanently the secondary school transcript of each student who has been enrolled in the school.

**Name of School** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Head of School)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Team Chair)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A**

**EVALUATION REGISTRATION FORM**

Date of Registration \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Head of School \_\_\_\_\_

List all divisions and grades \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students \_\_\_\_\_ Number of faculty \_\_\_\_\_

Date self-study is to begin \_\_\_\_\_

Semester and Year for team visit \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one: AIMS-Only \_\_\_\_ AIMS/MSA \_\_\_\_ MSA-Only \_\_\_\_

If MSA Only, please tell us which Middle States instrument the school proposes to use:

\_\_\_\_\_

I have studied the AIMS procedures and agree to complete a thorough and comprehensive self-study fully involving faculty, trustees, and other members of the school community as indicated in the Self-Study Guide.

Signed (Head of School) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**ESTIMATED COSTS WORKSHEET**

1. Three sets of instruments at \$\_\_ each \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Cost of housing \$\_\_\_\_\_/night x three nights x \_\_\_\_\_ team members \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Travel at current IRS rate/mile at average 100 miles round trip  
x \_\_\_\_\_ team members \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Cost of a substitute per diem x three days x \_\_\_\_\_  
teachers. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Meals/day \$\_\_\_\_\_ x three days x \_\_\_\_\_ team members \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Cost of social gathering on Day 1 of Visit \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Extra Secretarial help - Number of hours \_\_\_\_\_ x \$\_\_\_\_\_/hour \_\_\_\_\_
  8. MSA fee, if a joint evaluation \_\_\_\_\_
  9. Costs for the training session. (Substitutes, travel, and lunch  
x number of team members) \_\_\_\_\_
  10. Computer costs, if rentals are needed. \_\_\_\_\_
  11. Costs of tech support/printing/copying self-study. \_\_\_\_\_
- Total \_\_\_\_\_

Recent surveys reveal that a school's average cost for 2-5 (above) equals \$1000 for each team member.

## Appendix C

### RECOMMENDED EVALUATION SCHEDULE

#### YEAR AND HALF BEFORE:

1. Register for evaluation with AIMS
2. Plan the scheduling and staffing for the evaluation
3. Review Statement of Philosophy

#### MINIMUM OF A YEAR BEFORE:

1. Form Self-Study Steering Committee
2. Faculty begin work on Program; other subcommittees may begin work

#### SIX MONTHS BEFORE:

1. Begin presentation of committee reports.
2. Plan for Chair's four-month visit.

#### FOUR MONTHS BEFORE:

1. Hold Four-Month Visit with the Chair.
2. Chair reviews the rough draft of the report.
3. Plan for Visiting Team orientation session and Chair's second visit at the school (4 – 6 weeks before the visit).

#### TWO MONTHS BEFORE:

1. Finalize, digitize, and copy completed self-study.

#### SIX WEEKS TO ONE MONTH BEFORE:

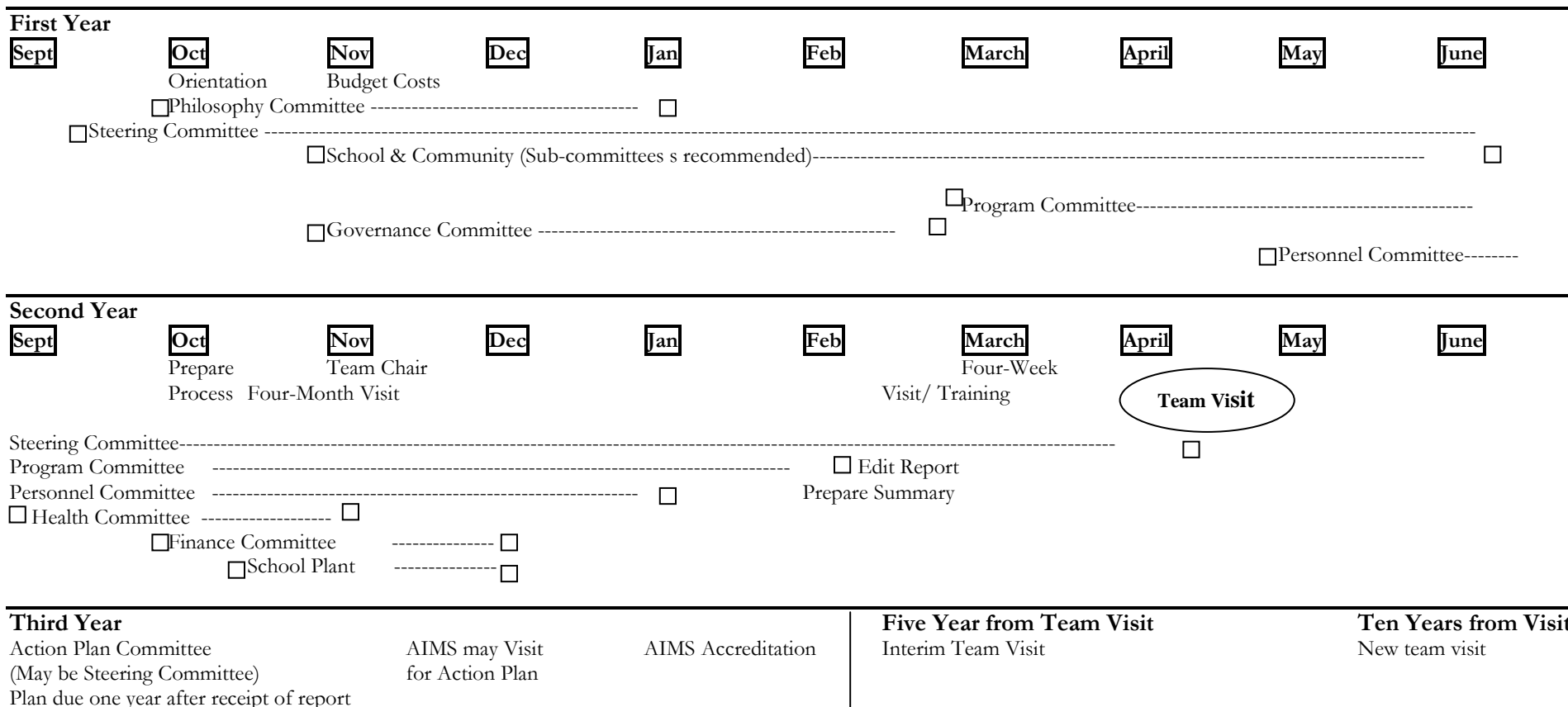
1. Confirm all arrangements for visit by the committee.
2. Head attends Visiting Team orientation session.
3. A copy of the Self-Study is given to each member of the Team and AIMS at the orientation.
4. Second meeting with the Chair and the Head, and if possible, the Vice Chair.

#### AFTER VISIT AND REPORT IS RECEIVED:

1. Visiting Team Report is received by school and made available to full faculty and Board.
2. Begin work on Action Plan, meeting any requirements stated in the cover letter sent with the report.

## Appendix D

### SAMPLE SELF-STUDY TIME LINE (For fall visit change by 6 months)



*This Sample Schedule must be modified to meet the particular needs of each school.*

## Appendix E

### SUGGESTED VISITING TEAM WORK SCHEDULE

A schedule for the afternoon prior to the evaluation should be worked out between the Team Chair and the School Head. It should include:

#### Day 1 Afternoon and Evening

1. One-hour training session for team members who missed the regular training session.
2. Afternoon organization meeting of the Evaluating Team.
3. Tour of the School, if not done at the team training session.
4. Social gathering with members of the school community selected and invited by the School Head (faculty, staff, parents, trustees, etc.).
5. Private team dinner.
6. Organizational team meeting, including an initial presentation of themes and strategic issues.

#### Day 2 of Evaluation

1. Classroom visitation throughout school day.
2. Short full team meeting following lunch, scheduled by Chair.
3. Meetings of sub-chair with faculty responsible for curriculum areas.
4. Meetings with students, parents, and trustees.
5. Group meetings with all faculty and administrators after school.
6. Preparation of sub-committee reports where possible.
7. Team dinner.
8. Full team meeting. Hear any subcommittee reports that have been completed.

#### Day 3 of Evaluation

1. Whole or subcommittee meetings as necessary.
2. Meeting with faculty on request.
3. Preparation of subcommittee reports.
4. Team meeting after lunch.
5. Team dinner.
6. Full team meeting. Presentation of subcommittee progress reports. Preparation of the final report in areas of full team agreement. Assignment to areas needing further visitation.
7. Review of the AIMS Standards to determine whether or not each has been met.

#### Day 4 of Evaluation

1. Re-visitation, if necessary, emphasizing areas which concern the team or need more in-depth.
2. Completion of all sub-committee reports and first draft of final report.
3. Chair meeting with School Head.
4. Meeting with faculty and Chair, if planned.

This timetable may be adjusted by AIMS to meet the needs of the School being evaluated.

## Appendix F

**This Appendix has been eliminated.**

Appendix G

VISITING TEAM REPORT FORMAT

When approved by the entire visiting committee, this report should be given to the Chair. It should be written in careful English and expressed in polite terms in full sentences. It will be read critically by many persons who are interested in this school. See Evaluation Procedures 1.

**Name of Committee or Sub-Committee:**

---

GENERAL STATEMENT

This statement is to give an overview of the section being evaluated. There needs to be enough detail to be clear to someone unfamiliar with the School but be kept to no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs. The information should include the courses taught in the department or area of learning, any that are required for graduation, the number of teachers assigned, full-time and part-time, the length of time that the class is taught each day and how many days per week. For self-contained classrooms this information could perhaps be covered in another way. Try to keep the description to half a page.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

The second paragraph should briefly compare the Team's observations while on the visit to the School's overview in the self-study and similarities and differences should be noted. Since a major purpose of the visit is to verify and validate the Self-Study Report, it is important that, in addition to the first paragraph, which is an overview often drawn from the Self-Study, that the Team compare and contrast its own experiences and observations while on campus. This paragraph should also give a brief explanation for prescriptive recommendations related to failed Standards.

The Committee **commends** the School for:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The Committee **recommends** that the School (except in the Governance Section, where School is replaced with Board):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix H

### SCHEDULE OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

This schedule is a convenient check–list of documentation required by the Self–Study Guide. Some charts found within sections of the Guide are not listed below. Also, the school must provide copies of any opinion surveys used in completing the Self–Study Report.

#### General

- \_\_\_ Self–Study Report — one copy for AIMS and each member of the Visiting Team
- \_\_\_ Statement of Philosophy
- \_\_\_ State of Maryland Certificate of Approval or exemption letter for religious schools. (MD schools only.)
- \_\_\_ Non–discrimination policy
- \_\_\_ DHR license for Nursery and/or Before/After School Child Care (MD schools only.)

#### Governance

- \_\_\_ Board roster
- \_\_\_ Articles of Incorporation, by–laws, 501(c)(3) letter
- \_\_\_ Conflict of Interest policy, Diversity Statement
- \_\_\_ Long–range or strategic plan
- \_\_\_ Sample Board agenda, policy manual, minutes

#### School and Community

- \_\_\_ Completed charts I-IV
- \_\_\_ Sample admission, marketing materials, financial assistance report

#### Program

- \_\_\_ Program documentation
- \_\_\_ School profile & Graduation requirements (secondary schools only)
- \_\_\_ Examples of multicultural materials and faculty & student diversity training
- \_\_\_ List of courses taught, frequency, and duration of meetings

Early Childhood

- \_\_\_ Child care license
- \_\_\_ Faculty and parent handbooks
- \_\_\_ Assessment instrument(s)
- \_\_\_ Materials related to a 12-month program, if offered

Boarding

- \_\_\_ Chart showing adult boarding coverage
- \_\_\_ List of years of boarding experience for all dorm parents

Counseling

- \_\_\_ Standardized test results
- \_\_\_ School profile (for secondary schools)

Personnel

- \_\_\_ Faculty salary scale and ranges
- \_\_\_ Faculty benefits description
- \_\_\_ Sample written teacher employment agreement
- \_\_\_ Administrative job descriptions
- \_\_\_ Criminal background letters

Academic Administration

- \_\_\_ Faculty and administration evaluation policy
- \_\_\_ Copies of faculty meeting agendas and all evaluation forms

Health

- \_\_\_ Student health forms
- \_\_\_ Immunization forms
- \_\_\_ Medical release forms
- \_\_\_ First aid procedures
- \_\_\_ Health and medication policies and procedures including medication training (MD only)
- \_\_\_ Special health problems list
- \_\_\_ Bloodborne Pathogen Plan
- \_\_\_ Medical Emergency Plan

Finance and Operations

- \_\_\_ Independent audit statements for past 5 years
- \_\_\_ Current budgets and budget reports including income statement & balance sheet
- \_\_\_ Three year financial plan

Institutional Advancement

- \_\_\_ Fundraising and marketing materials
- \_\_\_ Chart showing fundraising results for past 5 years

Plant, Safety, and Transportation

- \_\_\_ Fire drill procedures
- \_\_\_ Log of completed fire drills for preceding school year
- \_\_\_ Record of Fire Marshal visits
- \_\_\_ Evacuation plans
- \_\_\_ Building floor plans and campus map
- \_\_\_ Crisis management plan

For the Visiting Team

- \_\_\_ Class lists, campus maps, class schedules, and other materials necessary to orient them to the school

## Appendix I

### FOUR-MONTH VISIT CHECKLIST

- \_\_\_ Review Appendix H to assure the school has/will have available all documents. Check off those seen.
- \_\_\_ Receive a copy of the final audit for the school's prior fiscal year.
- \_\_\_ Review arrangements for overnight accommodations, transportation, parking, work space at both school and hotel, and arrangements for computers and printers. This may include a tour.
- \_\_\_ Review the self-study completed to date to assure all areas are appropriately covered and that it will be completed in time for the team orientation. Determine the feasibility of receiving an advance copy to review prior to the orientation.
- \_\_\_ Determine whether documents can be available in advance in order to facilitate team organization efforts.
- \_\_\_ Communicate to AIMS any concerns found during the visit.
- \_\_\_ Be certain the School's Self-Study has enumerated strengths and weaknesses for each subject area in the Program section.

## Appendix J



### CODE OF ETHICS

#### *ADMISSIONS*

1. A school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission policies. \*
2. A school will not initiate a conversation with a student or family for the intended purpose of recruiting that student from another member school.
3. A school recognizes the right of its students or families to visit and consider other schools without notifying the present school. It also recognizes and respects the right of another school to hold preliminary discussions about the possibility of admission.
4. Upon request and as promptly as possible, a school will send an official copy of a transcript (or its equivalent) and other pertinent information to another school to which a student has applied.\* However, if a transcript or other information is being withheld, the present school will notify the requesting school immediately.
5. (a) A school will advise any school requesting a transcript if a family has not met its financial obligations at its present school.  
  
(b) A school will not offer an enrollment contract to a student without first receiving an official copy of a transcript (or its equivalent) from the student's present school.\*
6. A school will not offer an enrollment contract to a student whose family has not made satisfactory arrangements to meet its financial obligations at another school.
7. A school will take all reasonable and lawful measures to maintain the confidentiality of reports and information exchanged among schools concerning students and parents.\*

#### *FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATION*

Need-based financial aid is the primary means to support access to independent schools by students of diverse socio-economic levels. For this reason, AIMS strongly endorses need-based financial aid and recommends that assistance be granted only on the basis of demonstrated financial need.

1. A school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its financial aid policies. \*
2. A school that offers merit awards will advise the Association at the start of each academic year. The Association will publish annually a list of all such merit award programs. For purposes of this Code, merit awards include any amounts granted in excess of demonstrated need.
3. A school will not use merit awards to "bargain" for a student attending, applying to, or committed to attending another AIMS school.

4. A school will use a uniform methodology to assess annually, in a consistent and equitable manner, each family's ability to pay for education.\*
5. A school will require adequate documentation of family resources when determining need.\*
6. A school will provide students and families with factual information about its aid opportunities, financing opportunities, policies, and procedures.
7. A school will use financial aid only as a means to enroll students who match the school's mission and academic programs. A school will not make financial awards, whether need-based or merit, to attract a student for whom the school's philosophy and academic programs are not well suited.
8. A school will not set different standards of behavior and academic performance for its financial aid recipients.\*
9. A school will refrain from and discourage others within the school community from disclosing the names of financial aid recipients and award amounts.\*
10. A school will safeguard the confidentiality of all financial information supplied by a family.\*

### ***HIRING OF FACULTY AND STAFF***

AIMS expects that school communities will espouse a spirit of respect and professionalism between employers and employees.

While many individuals in an AIMS school may participate in the employment process, the Head of School is responsible for ensuring that the following standards are met:

1. A school will not take any action intended to encourage an employee of another school, whether a member of AIMS or not, to break a contract.
2. A school will ascertain whether the candidate is under contract at another school.
3. A school will recognize the right of an employee to visit and consider employment in another school without notifying the employee's present school. A school will also recognize and respect the right of another school to hold discussions about the possibilities of employment without notifying the present school. In both cases, it is understood that the period of employment under consideration does not coincide with a period to which the employee is already committed by contract.
4. Prior to entering into an employment contract with an employee of another AIMS school, the school head will notify the head of the employee's present school and will also direct the employee to do so.
5. A school head will not stand in the way of an employee who wishes to move to another school after the employee has fulfilled all contractual obligations.

### ***PUBLIC INTEGRITY***

1. A school should honor all promises made to its various constituencies and to the general public.
2. A school will carefully avoid misleading statements about its programs, situation, or status.

\* From *Principles of Good Practice*, by the National Association of Independent Schools

## Appendix K

### DIVERSITY QUESTIONS

Diversity questions found throughout the Guide are listed in Appendix K as a way to help the Visiting Team to focus on this area, to assess school-wide diversity practice, and, if appropriate, to help the Team to make diversity commendations and recommendations.

#### **III. GOVERNANCE**

DOCUMENTATION: G. A copy of the School's diversity statement, if it has one.

2. Please analyze the composition of the Board in terms of diversity. Does the Board include trustees from different racial and ethnic groups? Trustees who represent other diverse groups within the school community?
3. How are Trustees oriented to the School and to their role as Trustees? What materials are made available to Board members and what ongoing education is provided to them? What diversity training has been provided to trustees? If not, please explain.
11. Please analyze minutes of Board meetings for the past three years. What issues has the Board spent the most time focused on? Do those issues include diversity issues? Has the Board spent sufficient time discussing, planning for, and taking steps to support diversity in the School? How has the Board's focus in the past three years been consistent with the School's statement of philosophy and its diversity statement (if it has one)?

#### **IV. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY**

5. (d) How does the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body compare to that of the local community?
11. What proactive steps has the School taken to recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse student body? What programming is in place to support the needs of diverse students? Please provide examples. Are there student affinity groups?
12. (e) What is the attrition rate among racially and ethnically diverse students over the past five years?
16. What steps does the School take to assure the confidentiality of financial aid awards? Who has access to this information? Who sits on the financial aid committee?
22. In what ways are parents informed about the School's diversity goals? How are parents involved in supporting diversity at the School?
23. In what ways are diverse families supported?

25. Describe and analyze the School's Parent Association, if one exists. Do the Parent's Association and its leadership reflect the diversity of the School? Consistent with the School's overall diversity, are Parents Association meetings and events designed to be appropriate for people of different socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds?
28. Does alumni leadership reflect the diversity of the School? What efforts are in place to involve racially and ethnically diverse alumni?
31. Are the Alumni Association's meetings and events appropriate for people of different socio-economic, racial, and cultural backgrounds?

## **V. PROGRAM**

DOCUMENTATION: (E) provide examples of multicultural materials and events, including texts, assemblies, speakers, summer readings, and any faculty and student diversity training.

### (A) DESIGN

- 1) A demonstration of the ways in which the program is highly congruent with the diversity statement, if the School has one.

### (D) TEACHING AND LEARNING

- (n) Please analyze how the program reflects the School's commitment to diversity by answering the following questions:
- Has the School provided teachers with any form of diversity training? Do teacher evaluation procedures and professional development opportunities encourage and support teachers in this area?
  - Is diversity an organic and intentional part of curriculum planning and development?
  - Are different cultures represented across the curriculum?
  - Can every child see him/herself in the curriculum?

### (E) CONGRUENCE BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM

2. Using the evidence gathered from the previous parts of this section, please make an argument, in a brief essay, for your School's success at creating a program that is highly congruent with the School's statement of philosophy and a diversity statement, if the School has one.

## **IX. PERSONNEL**

9. Does the administrative staff reflect the diversity within the greater School community? What efforts have been made to hire people of color to fill administrative positions?



14. Analyze the composition of the faculty in light of the School's philosophy, diversity goals, diversity statement, if it has one, and the needs of its students.

#### **X. ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION**

10. Describe the faculty recruitment process. If diversity is a goal, describe strategies targeted to recruiting people of color.
15. Please describe the efforts of the administration to accomplishing the School's diversity goals. For example, how is the Head involved in diversity issues and in what specific ways does he/she support this area? How much time do other administrators spend on diversity issues?

#### **XII. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

17. What institutional financial resources has the School committed to support diversity? Are these resources adequate to implement the School's diversity goals?

#### **XIII. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT**

13. How accurately do the School's publications communicate the diversity goals of the School?

## Appendix L

### Questions for Meeting with Faculty

Question order

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. What do you consider to be the most important part of your school's mission and how is it reflected in the daily life of the school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. What aspects of this school would you hope to always be in place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Describe the school's decision-making process.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. What is your greatest hope for the future of the school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. What has been your biggest curriculum/teaching success?
- \_\_\_\_\_ F. What professional development events have you participated in this past year?
- \_\_\_\_\_ G. What are ways in which faculty and administrators engage in the life of the schools outside of their classrooms or offices?
- \_\_\_\_\_ H. The team chair may develop a question arising out of the summary issues discussed at the Sunday evening team meeting.

---

#### Group Sessions Instructions:

- In advance of the visit, the school will assign and schedule faculty members to small groups. Each group should have approximately ten to fifteen members. Administrators should have a separate group. The group session could happen simultaneously or during different times, whatever causes the least disruption to the school community.
- During the team's first night meeting the chair will guide the team in selecting the questions and their order. Questions A, B, C, and, D are recommended. The usefulness of questions E-H vary from school to school. The questions for the administrator's group may need adjustment. The chair will assign two or three team members to each group.
- The group session end when all of the prepared questions have been asked or at the half hour mark, whichever comes first. The visiting team may not ask any questions other than those prepared in advance in conjunction with the chair.