ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT MARYLAND & DC SCHOOLS

ACCREDITATION GUIDE
7.0 Edition

PROCEDURES

SELF-STUDY GUIDE

STANDARDS
This edition of the AIMS Accreditation Guide is a direct outgrowth of feedback from member schools, who clamored for a re-designed process that would preserve the basic accreditation framework while providing greater opportunities for deeper analysis and reflection. Edition 7.0 also takes into account a dynamic strategic educational landscape that presents member schools with an array of entirely new challenges and opportunities. Whenever possible, schools are encouraged to use the accreditation process to support and/or generate their institutional strategic plan, thereby serving two needs of the institution in one exercise.

The AIMS accreditation process includes a two-part Self-Study that streamlines information-gathering, allowing schools to focus their attention and energy on analysis and reflection; a Design Conference, during which each school will help shape the Self-Study process to be most responsive to its own circumstances; a new focus on school climate as essential to successful student learning; opportunities for cross-disciplinary conversations1; and a broader and more thorough look at school financial sustainability issues, including thinking and planning strategically at all levels.

While including significant changes, the new accreditation process remains anchored in principles that have guided AIMS accreditation since the 1980s: the powerful role the Self-Study plays in each school’s ongoing efforts to strengthen educational experiences for every student; the need for transparency and the broad participation of all school constituencies in the Self-Study process; and the conviction that the accreditation process should be a fair, if rigorous, test of each school’s compliance with standards and its close adherence to its own stated mission.

The process of re-envisioning AIMS accreditation took nearly four years and included exceptionally rich conversations with the AIMS Board of Trustees, the Accreditation Re-Design Committee, many AIMS Heads of School, both individually and collectively, and administrative leaders, including academicians and business officers. This version thus represents the best thinking of many extraordinary people.

Successful completion of the AIMS accreditation process represents a major accomplishment for any school. The continued enthusiasm of AIMS member schools for a process that involves a rigorous Self-Study and preparation of a written report, an immersive 3-day visit by a team of outside educators, and the development of a written Action Plan for school improvement, exemplifies the schools’ dedication and the high standards to which they hold themselves. The AIMS Evaluation Guide 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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1 See Self-Study Section X (E); Section XIII, which suggests cross-disciplinary themes and questions; and directions for the development of Action Plan school-wide goals in the Procedures.
# ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

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I. **Process Overview**

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 **Interim Progress Report** is due five years from the date of the most recent visit.

Visiting Committee and Interim Progress Reports are reviewed by the AIMS Commission on Accreditation, 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 Commission on Accreditation may require a School to demonstrate continued compliance with Standards through interim reports or visits, and may impose interim conditions.*

The School’s Self-Study proceeds in two phases:

- **Phase One** is focused on the gathering of information and data, which involves only a small number of people in the School community. This process should take no more than 3-6 months to complete.

  At the conclusion of this phase, before the School embarks on Phase Two, the School, Committee Chair, and AIMS, meet for a Design Conference, which is explained below. During this Phase, the School conducts its own review of compliance with all AIMS and Local Standards.

- **Phase Two** involves the entire School community in analysis and reflection, guided by questions in the Self-Study Guide. This part of the process must be inclusive of the entire faculty and proceed by consensus. This Phase takes no more than 12-18 months.

Two years prior to the Accreditation Visiting Committee’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 mission statement, 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 **IV Teaching and Learning** section of the Self-Study Guide.

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1 See Section II: Core Mission and Values for a definition of Mission Statement.
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 Visiting Committee. AIMS will establish a formal deadline for submission once the dates of the visit have been determined.

**The Design Conference**

The Design Conference is scheduled at the conclusion of Phase One of the Self-Study and includes the Head of School, the School’s Self-Study Chair, and the AIMS Director of Accreditation Services, who chairs the meeting. The purpose of the Conference is to review School compliance with Standards, and to review School options to shape the Self-Study process in ways that will be most meaningful to its own purposes and circumstances.

Topics covered during the Self-Study include:

- Preliminary review and clarification of Standards.
- Organization of curriculum and co-curriculum, and options for presentation.
- 3-Year Teaching and Learning data.
- Optional Teaching and Learning questions.
- A review of the School’s financial position.
- Optional financial sustainability questions.
- A review of the School’s strategic outlook as it may affect areas of focus and emphasis in the Self-Study and during the Committee visit.

The School makes final preparations for the visit of the Accreditation Visiting Committee. Four months prior to the visit, the Head of School meets with the Chair of the Accreditation Visiting Committee. 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 Accreditation Visiting Committee meets for the first time at the School. At this meeting, the Visiting Committee receives copies of the Self-Study Report, becomes familiar with the School’s campus, and is oriented by a member of the AIMS staff.

Following the visit, the Committee Chair meets with the Commission on Accreditation to review the Visiting Committee 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.

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 1st for fall visits, or March 1st for spring visits. Following submission of the Action Plan, the Visiting Committee Chair and one other member of the Visiting Committee may revisit the School. The Action Plan is reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation, which 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.
The Interim Progress Report

Five years following the visit, the School submits to AIMS an Interim Report, which must include and address any significant changes (see Procedures, p. 17). A two-person team, comprised of one member of the original Accreditation Visiting Committee and one member of the Commission on Accreditation, visits the School and reports to the Commission on Accreditation.

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 MSA Excellence by Design and Sustaining Excellence Instruments. 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 Committee 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 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 Articles 8(A) and 8(B) 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 Committee 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 Committee adopts a recommendation made by the School;
- When the Committee 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 AIMS and Local Standards have been met;
- The School has complied with all other requirements of the accreditation process.

VI. Interim Visits, 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 is not 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 Commission on Accreditation for suspension or revocation when a site visit has already taken place, or where the Board determines that the School is in imminent danger of ceasing operations or there is imminent danger to students or other members of the School community.

VII. Appeals

The School may appeal a suspension or revocation decision by the AIMS Board. The Executive Director will provide timely written notification of appeal rights to the Head of School and the School’s Board Chair.

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

1. Within thirty days of receipt of written notification of the adverse decision, the School must notify the Executive Director in writing of its decision to appeal.

2. The School’s prior accreditation and membership status will remain in effect until a final decision is reached, except where the Board determines that the School is in imminent danger of ceasing operations or there is imminent danger to students or other members of the School community.

3. All appeals are heard and decided by the AIMS Board. Its decisions are final.
4. As part of the appeal process, the Head of School and a Trustee will have the right to appear before the AIMS Board before it reaches a final decision.

5. 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 Committee Report.
   b. The minutes of relevant Commission on Accreditation 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 Committee and Commission on Accreditation.
   f. Any other information the Board may deem relevant.

6. Should the AIMS Board affirm a decision to suspend or revoke accreditation, 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.

7. 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Process Details

(A) Beginning the Process

The accreditation 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 Committee Chair and Visiting Committee 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 Committee 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 are appointed by the Head of School. AIMS strongly recommends that the Head of School not serve as Chair of the Self-Study. The Steering Committee Chair(s), with approval of the Head of School, will appoint members of the Steering Committee, keeping in mind that the process must be inclusive and 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 Self-Study. Phase One of the Self-Study should be completed by an appropriately small number of people; Phase Two, by contrast, 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 Committee 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 Committee

The Accreditation Visiting Committee 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 Committee members is made solely by AIMS, in consultation with the Head of School.

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

1. The Visiting Committee Chair will be a Head or Assistant Head of an Independent School.
2. Whenever possible, one-third of the Visiting Committee will have prior experience on an Accreditation Visiting Committee and at least fifty percent of the Visiting Committee will be from AIMS member Schools. For AIMS-only evaluations, the School may request that up to twenty percent of the Visiting Committee come from non-AIMS member Schools.

3. While some Visiting Committee members should be from Schools with philosophies similar to that of the School being visited, the Visiting Committee should represent, to the extent possible, the diversity of Schools in AIMS.

4. The Visiting Committee should reflect, to the extent possible, the School’s size, divisions, and program areas.

5. The Visiting Committee will be not less than five members, including the Chair. Committee size will vary with the size of the School and the breadth and complexity of its educational programs. Generally, 1 Committee member is appointed for every six faculty members. However, this number may vary with individual school differences.

6. For joint accreditations with Middle States, AIMS will appoint the Visiting Committee Chair and Middle States will appoint the Vice-Chair; and Middle States may appoint up to one-third of the Committee members. The overall administration of the process will be by AIMS.

(B) Accreditation Visiting Committee Charge and Responsibilities

Each member of the Accreditation Visiting Committee must remain focused on the Philosophy and Purposes of the AIMS accreditation process, understand and respect the School’s mission, maintain a high degree of objectivity and independence, and keep the best interests of the students at the heart of the process. The Visiting Committee 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 Committee must hold the School accountable both for the implementation of its mission statement and to meet every AIMS and Local Standard.

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

While the Self-Study Report is essential to the Committee’s understanding of the School, AIMS expects Committee 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 Committee is expected to use independent judgment in shaping the Visiting Committee Report.
(C) **Visiting Committee Responsibilities**

1. Attend the Visiting Committee Orientation session approximately four weeks prior to the visit.


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 Committee during its visit and to make global, non-prescriptive recommendations for the future.

6. Carry out the assignments made by the Visiting Committee 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 Committee’s aggregated observations, about whether or not the School is implementing its stated philosophy.

8. Maintain the strictest confidentiality. Visiting Committee members must communicate with one another carefully and discreetly during the visit, and they may not communicate to anyone not on the Committee, any information about the School. Except for the Committee Chair, Visiting Committee members may not take with them any materials about the School after the visit.

(D) **Visiting Committee Chair Responsibilities**

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

2. Assure that each Visiting Committee member discharges his or her responsibilities, as outlined above.

3. Identify a Vice-Chair and assign such responsibilities as are appropriate.

4. Attend the Design Conference, at the conclusion of Phase One of the School’s Self-Study.
5. Visit the School approximately four months before the visit (see Appendix I.). At the 4-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 Committee Orientation session, approximately four weeks before the visit.

6. Work with the Head of School and AIMS to schedule and coordinate a Visiting Committee session, approximately four weeks before the visit. On the same day as this 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 Committee with parents, students, and trustees, and administrators; review the School’s progress in providing the required documentation (see Appendix H).

7. At the Visiting Committee Orientation session: provide each Committee member with a Committee roster (supplied by AIMS), visit schedules, and location of accommodations for the visit; distribute subcommittee assignments and be certain each Committee member will read his/her assigned sections of the Self-Study Report in advance of the visit and will arrive prepared with a pre-written draft introduction for his/her section(s) and draft recommendations and commendations. *Advance preparation is essential to the work of the Committee.*

8. Be certain every teacher is observed at least once.

9. The Committee must observe at least one unannounced fire drill and pick-up and drop-off procedures.

10. Be certain every Standard is reviewed for compliance: the Chair indicates AIMS Accreditation Standards compliance by initialing each; Local Standards for Maryland or DC compliance is also indicated by initialing after the entire Visiting Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 may 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 Committee observations or conclusions at this meeting.

13. Submit the Accreditation Visiting Committee’s Report, School audit, and Standards Checklist to AIMS within two to four weeks after the School visit.
14. Appear before the Commission on Accreditation during its review of the Accreditation Visiting Committee Report. The Commission 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 health and safety, are not prescriptive. The Commission will not substitute its judgment for the Committee regarding substantive issues.

**(E) School Responsibilities:**

1. Assure the completion of Phase One of the Self-Study within 3-6 months of starting the process and completion of the entire Self-Study Report before the Visiting Committee Orientation session, approximately four weeks before the date of the visit.

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 Committee members during the visit, including meals and transportation.

5. Provide a comfortable, private work/meeting space for Committee members while on campus. This space must be off-limits to anyone other than Committee members for the duration of the visit.

6. Provide Committee 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 Committee on Day 2 or 3 after school. The faculty should be arranged in groups of roughly 10-15, and the administration should be assigned to a separate group.

8. Host a reception on the afternoon of Day 1 for the Visiting Committee, faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, and selected parents.

**(F) Head of School Responsibilities:**

1. Meet with the Committee Chair, Self-Study Chair, and Director of Accreditation Services for a Design Conference, at the conclusion of Phase One of the Self-Study.

2. Meet with the Visiting Committee Chair approximately four months prior to the visit and provide him/her with a final audited financial statement for the School’s prior fiscal year (see Appendix I).
3. Give two brief talks — at the Visiting Committee Orientation session and at the Day 1 reception — to welcome the Committee, explain the School’s philosophy, describe its history, organization, personnel, students, plant, and 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 Committee to particularly note.

4. Arrange for a tour of the campus for the Visiting Committee at its orientation session.

5. Assure that classes are in session and teachers do not administer tests, quizzes, show movies, or take field trips during the duration of the Committee visit. The Head should also notify the Visiting Committee of any special class schedules or events, or of any classes that only meet on certain days.

6. Be certain that appropriate meetings are scheduled for Committee members with parents, students, administrators, and trustees.

7. Free his/her calendar during the visit in order to meet with Committee members and to assure that the process proceeds smoothly.

XI. The Accreditation Visiting Committee Report (Phase Two: Analysis & Reflection)

(A) Substance and Style (see Appendix G)

After review and approval by the entire Accreditation Visiting Committee, 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, weaknesses, and areas for growth.

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 Commission on Accreditation.

In writing the Report, the Visiting Committee 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 Committee uncovers health or safety concerns; 2) the School fails a Standard; or 3) the Committee adopts a recommendation made in the School’s Self-Study.

4. The Visiting Committee Report may make no reference to the likelihood of accreditation.
5. All subcommittee Reports should be shared with and approved by the entire Visiting Committee. While unanimity is preferred, in case of disagreement, a majority of the Committee 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 Committee members and representing the point of view of the whole Visiting Committee, should follow the general outline of the Self-Study Guide. It should begin with the dates of the visit, the names of Committee 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 Committee’s Report should be formatted as follows (Appendix G):

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 one half page.

SECOND PARAGRAPH
The second paragraph should briefly compare the Committee’s observations while on the visit to the School’s overview in the Self-Study and similarities and differences 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 and those recommendations that stand out as especially important, including any safety concerns.

The Chair should return the final Accreditation Visiting Committee Report promptly within two to four weeks to the AIMS office as a hard copy, or the Chair may arrange to send the entire Report to the Director of Accreditation as an email attachment.

HOW TO HANDLE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) QUESTIONS

Beginning with the 6th Edition, the AIMS Evaluation Guide includes questions throughout the Self-Study Guide that probe a School’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion 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 DEI work, to be successful, should be an organic part of every area of School life. This approach, however, means that the School’s DEI practice as a whole is more difficult to assess. For this reason, the DEI questions found throughout the Guide are listed in Appendix J — as a way to help the Visiting Committee to focus on this area, to assess School DEI practice, and, if appropriate, to make commendations and recommendations about diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

XII. Distribution and Publicity

Once approved by the Commission on Accreditation, copies of the Visiting Committee 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 Committee 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

Two copies of the School’s Action Plan – one paper and a digital copy – are due to AIMS Director of Accreditation one year from the date of the visit — October 1st for fall visits, and March 1st 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 Committee Report; 2) to support the School’s continuing self-improvement efforts; and 3) to serve as a guide or measuring stick for the Interim Report Review.
(A) Guidelines for Developing and Writing an Action Plan

1. Work should begin upon the receipt of the Accreditation Visiting Committee 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 Committee 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 also establish two to four School-wide goals that reflect major themes the School believes should receive the greatest strategic 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 Committee 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.

   The process of developing School-wide goals begins with a review of the School’s financial and educational model, based upon its responses to the following sections of the Self-Study Guide: strategic challenges identified in Governance C(11); essential student qualities identified in Teaching and Learning A(1); and financial sustainability issues identified in Chapter X, Section E, questions 2-5.

   Based upon this review, please tell us whether the School’s financial and/or educational model should be changed or in any way modified to better enable it to meet anticipated strategic challenges in the coming 3-5 years? If so, please tell us how and why.

   This section of the Action Plan should be developed by a committee that includes the Head of School, selected Trustees and teachers, and administrators responsible for Admission, Advancement, Financial Assistance, and Finance.

5. The Action Plan should include the following elements:
   a. A response to any specific requirement stated in the AIMS Commission on Accreditation’s cover letter, which is sent with the Visiting Committee 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 Visiting Committee Reports, and the School’s analysis in 4 above. 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 Committee 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 Commission on Accreditation will appoint two reviewers to study the Action Plan. One reviewer will be a member of the original Accreditation Visiting Committee, if possible, preferably the Chair or Vice Chair, and the other will be a member of the Commission on Accreditation. The Commission on Accreditation may require the reviewers to visit the School as part of the Action Plan Review.

2. Two paper copies and one digital copy of the Action Plan must be sent to the AIMS Director of Accreditation 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 Committee Report and, if needed, the Self-Study Report.

3. After the reviewers have read the Action Plan, they will consult with one another and may schedule a one-day campus visit to meet with appropriate members of the Board of Trustees, 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 and/or Action Plan review, the reviewers will prepare a brief written report for presentation to the Commission on Accreditation. The Report should address the following questions:

A. Is the Action Plan an adequate response to the Self-Study and Accreditation Visiting Committee Report? Has the School made a good-faith response to the recommendations made in the
Accreditation Visiting Committee 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 sufficiently detailed?

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 Commission on Accreditation member) will present the Report to the AIMS Commission on Accreditation, 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. **Interim Progress Report**

(A) **Form of the Report**

Five years after the visit of the Accreditation Visiting Committee (year eight of the accreditation cycle; see Procedures, p. 3) the School must submit to AIMS two copies of a written Interim 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 1st** for fall visits, and **March 1st** for spring visits.

Approximately one-year prior to the due date, the Head of School should appoint an Interim Progress Report Steering Committee, which should begin to reexamine the Accreditation Visiting Committee Report and Action Plan. As with the Self-Study, the process to prepare the Interim Progress Report should be inclusive of the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees.

The Interim 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 Committee 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 Interim 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 Interim Visit:*

Grades added should receive special attention in the Interim Progress 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 Interim Visit, the following should be completed.**

**NEW GRADES**

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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 administrate 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 to these grades.

   c. What co-curricular (extra-curricular) opportunities are offered in these grades?
7. Describe the impact of the addition 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, if any, 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? Please explain.

(C) The Interim Progress Report Visit

A one-day visit to the School will be made by a two-person Interim Review Team, appointed by AIMS — one member will be from the original Accreditation Visiting Committee, if possible, and the other member from AIMS Commission on Accreditation. The Interim Review Team will meet with appropriate members of the Board of Trustees, the administration, selected department heads and/or teachers, and the School’s Interim Progress Report Steering Committee. The School will pay the following team member expenses: travel, lunch, substitute (if needed). The purpose of the visit will be to check the validity of the Interim 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 Committee Report, the Action Plan, and the Interim 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 Committee, and the status of its plans for the future.

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

(D) Commission on Accreditation Review

After reviewing the Interim Review Report, AIMS Commission on Accreditation 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.
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I. PROCESS

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

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. Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above.

3. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made to strengthen the self-study process for the future?
II. CORE MISSION AND VALUES

This section asks the School to reflect upon its core mission and values as articulated in a written mission statement. Throughout this instrument, “mission statement” means any guiding document –mission, philosophy, vision, core principles, for example – provided the statement chosen is routinely and consistently used to inform parents, students, faculty, staff, and the public about the school’s purposes, beliefs, and values. The document chosen must be used consistently throughout this self-study.

A carefully written mission statement 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 guide for the work of the Board, administration, and faculty; it forms the basis of the School’s promises to students and parents; and it is a public statement of purposes against which the School is held accountable in the accreditation process. To gain accreditation, a School must demonstrate that its current practice is highly congruent with its mission statement.

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

AIMS also recommends, but does not require, that each School develop Board-approved Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – either a separate document or contained within the mission statement.

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. A copy of the existing mission statement, either revised and approved by the Board, or re-ratified by the Board if not revised.

ii. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement, if applicable.

iii. Other guiding documents, if applicable: vision, philosophy, core principles.

iv. If community surveys or questionnaires were used, please indicate and document.

iv. A brief narrative description of the School’s history, including any significant changes or events.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Prepared By:

How Prepared:
1. Describe the process by which the School’s mission statement was reviewed for this evaluation. What major issues, if any, were discussed? In reflecting on the mission 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. Using the mission statement, please identify the School’s most fundamental purposes, beliefs, and values – educational, ethical, and social.

3. How is the School’s mission statement presented clearly to all constituencies? How is it used to educate new members of the community, including teachers, students, and parents?

4. Does the School use the mission statement consistently in all publications and on its website? If not, please point out the inconsistencies.

5. If the School uses other guiding documents in addition to a mission statement, please tell us how they interrelate.

6. SUMMARY OF SECTION

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above.

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

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:
   i. Board Roster
   ii. By-Laws
   iii. Conflict of Interest Policy
   iv. Most Recent Strategic Plan
   v. Redacted Head Employment Contract
   vi. Description of Head Evaluation Process
   vii. Most Recent Audit & Management Letter
   viii. Board Self-Evaluation Instrument
   ix. Board Composition Summary

Dashboard:
Please check the most appropriate box for each item enumerated below. For any answered ‘No’ or ‘Needs Work’, please provide an explanation.

**Board Management**
- Meeting Agendas
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Minutes
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Policy Manual
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Document Retention & Whistleblower Policies
  - Yes
  - No
- (Sarbanes-Oxley)
- Paperless Document Management
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Crisis Management Plan
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Orientation
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Mentoring
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
- Ongoing Trustee Education
  - Yes
  - No
  - Needs Work
Annual Board Evaluation  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Committee on Trustees  ◡ Yes ◡ No  
Executive Committee  ◡ Yes ◡ No  
Finance Committee  ◡ Yes ◡ No  

**Board – Head Relationship**
Clear Delineation of Roles  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Head Employment Contract  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Head Annual Written Evaluation  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Annual Compensation Review  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Safe Harbor Compliance  ◡ Yes ◡ No  

**Financial Oversight**
Budget Approval Process  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Effective Monthly Reporting  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Rolling 3-Year Financial Plan  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Longitudinal Financial Cohort Data  ◡ Yes ◡ No ◡ Needs Work  
Annual Audit & Management Letter  ◡ Yes ◡ No  

**Support for Institutional Advancement**
Advancement (Development) Committee  ◡ Yes ◡ No  

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2. **SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION**

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

A. **Trustees are well-versed in the school’s mission and values, and they take them into account when making decisions and determining overall institutional strategy.**

1. During a Board meeting, please ask each trustee to write a list of 3-5 institutional characteristics that are essential to the school’s educational beliefs, traditions, and values. Then analyze the results in relation to the school’s stated mission. How closely do trustee lists correspond to the school’s mission?

2. Please describe a recent important Board decision. In making the decision, were the school’s mission and values an explicit part of the deliberative process? If not, what steps can the Board take to ensure that the mission and values are explicitly considered before future decisions are made?

3. Please analyze the Board’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to recommendations made in the AIMS Statement on DEI. (See document available on the AIMS website.)
B. **Trustees understand the roles and responsibilities of an independent school Board.**

4. What are the roles and responsibilities of trustees at your school? What outside resources did the Board use in determining them?

5. In the past five years, how often has the Board formally evaluated its own performance?

6. Please summarize the results of the most recent Board self-evaluation. Were those results shared with the full Board? Did the Board discuss ways to strengthen trustee practice?

7. If areas for improvement were identified, please tell us whether and how those were addressed.

8. Based upon information and data gathered in Phase I, please identify any areas in which the Board needs to improve.

C. **Trustees stay informed about relevant strategic issues and developments. The Board as a whole spends an adequate amount of time thinking and planning strategically.**

9. How do trustees stay informed about the strategic environment and emerging trends that could affect the School?

10. What outside sources does the Board routinely use to stay informed about strategically important developments and trends, including financial, educational, and cultural?

11. As a whole Board, please identify those strategic issues that it considers most important to the school’s future, both educational and financial? What are those issues? (Examples might include demographic changes, generational differences, or competitive risks posed by innovative educational models.)

12. From among the strategic issues identified in question 11 above, which one or two are the most challenging for the school? Please use those issues to help us gain insight into how the Board thinks about the most complex issues facing the school – for which there may not be immediate or obvious answers. Please tell us:
   - Has the Board formally discussed these issues? When? How often?
   - Are they addressed in the school’s strategic plan?
   - If not already in the strategic plan, is there a plan to revisit the issues on a periodic basis?
   - By what means will the Board continue to reassess the importance of these issues to the school’s financial sustainability?

13. Relying on Board minutes¹ from meetings during the past twelve months, please evaluate the Board’s use of time spent on 1) routine Board business, 2) issues related to oversight

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¹ AIMS recognizes that in some cases, the bulk of strategic thinking happens in committee. In those cases, schools should note that fact. However, strategic thinking is an essential governing skill and should be cultivated by the Board as a whole.
responsibilities, and 3) strategic challenges and opportunities. Did the Board spend an adequate amount of time discussing strategic issues?

14. What steps might the Board take to ensure that more time is reserved for thinking and planning strategically?

D. **The Board’s deliberative process is analytical and well informed.**

15. Choose a past decision by the Board – one that was consequential and complex – and analyze the process by which the Board reached a decision. In your analysis, please include the following elements: a) clarity about institutional values and goals, b) the gathering of relevant data and information, c) the exploration of differing views, d) a logical and rational decision, e) effective implementation, and f) an assessment of outcomes over time.

16. What lessons can be drawn from the analysis in question 15 above?

3. **SUMMARY OF SECTION**

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made for future action?
IV. TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

*Please review questions shown as optional during the Design Conference.*

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. The School’s presentation of the curriculum should be sufficiently accurate and thorough to support the following broad institutional objectives: 1) ongoing analysis of horizontal and vertical cohesion and balance; 2) accurate communication about the educational program to parents and the wider public; and 3) continuity of the educational program over time. Schools should present their educational programs in one of the following ways:

   a) Course descriptions
   b) Scope and sequence
   c) Curriculum map
   d) Program inventory (See Appendix F)

ii. A presentation of the School’s co-curriculum², in outline form.

iii. 3-Year longitudinal assessments (aggregated by division) of learning in math, English or language arts, and one other discipline to be chosen by the School.³

iv. A statement explaining how and how frequently overall instructional effectiveness by division is assessed. Be certain to explain whether and how aggregated student outcomes are used in this process and if not, why not.

v. A complete list of faculty and administration by division, including degrees and years of experience.

vi. A copy of the school’s written faculty and administration evaluation policy, and evidence of its regular and systematic implementation.

vii. Faculty attrition rates for the past five years by division.

viii. A statement enumerating the School’s diversity, equity, and inclusion goals as they pertain to teaching and learning, including students, teachers, curriculum content, and pedagogy.

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² Each school is free to define co-curriculum according to its mission and educational program.
³ If this data has not been collected, please note that fact. The school will be asked to include plans for the future collection and analysis of longitudinal assessment data in the Action Plan. This information is used solely to understand how a school uses aggregated student outcomes as part of its overall efforts to continuously strengthen teaching and learning. It is intended for internal purposes only and will not be shared.
viii. Childcare license, if applicable.

ix. A copy of the School’s Acceptable Use Policy

x. Demonstration of compliance with applicable local and AIMS Standards.

xi. Upper School graduation requirements, if applicable.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

*Using the information and data above, please analyze and reflect upon each topic below by subject matter and by division. Wherever possible, AIMS also encourages schools to analyze teaching and learning by whole school. Understanding curriculum and pedagogy both horizontally and vertically can yield especially important insights.*

A. **Students**

1. As a whole faculty, please develop a list of those skills, habits of mind, and key content areas deemed essential for all students. Please be sure to consider critical thinking, problem-solving, and non-cognitive skills such as curiosity, creativity, and perseverance. This list of essential content and skills should be informed by current outside research and developed by consensus of the faculty and administration. (In answering this question, please enumerate the outside research used.)

2. As a whole faculty, please also develop a list of the characteristics relevant to teaching and learning of the student body currently enrolled, observed over time and informed by research.

B. **Curriculum**

3. Is the curriculum sequentially coherent and developmentally appropriate? Please support your answer with examples from each division.

4. Is there appropriate balance among the core academic disciplines, including English or language arts, math, science, and history or social studies, and other content areas defined by the School? Again, please provide examples to support your answer.

5. Does the curriculum include opportunities for students to learn the essential skills and content enumerated in 1 above? In answering this question, please use any data described in 18 below as one indicator of the effectiveness of the curriculum.

6. Are curriculum planning and development ongoing? Do they take into account (a) the current needs of students, (b) research about subject matter, pedagogy, and the learning process, and (c) the world in which students will live? Please support your answer with examples.
7. Are different cultures and perspectives represented across the curriculum? Please give us examples?

8. Can students see themselves in the curriculum? Again, share examples.

9. Is DEI an organic and intentional part of curriculum planning and development?

10. In what ways is technology used in the classroom? How does the faculty evaluate the impact of technology on student learning?

11. How are students taught about Internet safety and digital citizenship?

C. Teaching
12. How do instructional styles and strategies reflect the variety of student learning styles within each class? In answering this question, please take into account any data described in 18 below.

13. Please tell us how teaching strategies align with student characteristics enumerated in 2 above.

14. How is faculty professional development ongoing and intentionally designed to help teachers stay informed about (a) latest developments in their fields, (b) outside research and perspectives concerning curriculum design and pedagogy, and (c) the skills, habits of mind, and content essential to students enumerated in 1 above?

D. Assessment
15. How is individual student academic progress measured? What types of formative and summative assessments are used?

16. Are standardized tests administered? If so, how are the results used?

E. Student Learning
17. In what ways do teachers provide support to students who need extra help and/or have learning challenges, whether or not formally diagnosed?

18. What steps do teachers take to respond to students who have social/emotional issues?

19. Do teachers use aggregated longitudinal classroom data to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching over time? If so, please provide examples. If not, please explain.

F. Academic Administration
20. By what means do administrators stay abreast of research and development in their fields?

21. Are teachers regularly evaluated? Is the evaluation system well understood by the faculty? Is the system systematically and regularly implemented? Is it effective?

22. Have teachers been provided with training in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?
23. Is diversity a goal in recruiting new teachers? If so, what strategies are used to increase or maintain diversity on the faculty?

24. Please analyze ongoing efforts by the administration, including the Head of School, to accomplish the school’s DEI goals.

25. Describe the contents of a student’s cumulative educational 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?

26. How is confidential material handled?

27. What materials remain in the file after the student leaves the School?

28. How are the files physically secured against fire, misplacement, loss, or unauthorized access?

29. For trips overseas, what procedures are in place to assure that parents and students are fully advised about travel-related risks?

G. Co-Curriculum

30. Please evaluate the effectiveness of the co-curriculum in light of the school’s mission. What evidence was considered in reaching its conclusions?

H. Congruence with Mission

31. Please assess the congruence of teaching and learning with the school’s mission by division and all school.

3. SELF-DESIGNED QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

With prior approval from AIMS during the Design Conference, the faculty and administration may elect to develop 3-4 school-wide questions about teaching and learning that have particular significance for them and their students, and to substitute these self-designed questions for selected questions above. Self-designed questions must be pre-approved by AIMS. Please refer to Section XIII. OPTIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS for suggestions.

4. SUMMARY OF SECTION

Describe the strengths and areas for improvement by division and discipline based on the answers above.

Based on these findings, what suggestions may be made for future action?
V. SCHOOL CLIMATE

The preparation of this section should be guided by an all-school committee that represents all academic divisions and administrative areas of responsibility.

School climate refers to the ways in which people actually experience a school’s norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. Climate is about a community’s lived experiences; culture, on the other hand, refers more objectively to a school’s history and traditions, and its aspirations and expectations as reflected in its stated mission and values. A school’s climate and culture are interrelated: the culture influences the way people feel about a school, thus contributing to its climate. Moreover, a lack of alignment between culture and climate can lead to confusion about the school’s core mission and purposes.

The research\(^4\) confirms that a school’s climate has a direct and powerful influence on teaching and learning. Student growth - intellectually, socially, and emotionally - depends to a great extent on how successfully school climate helps them to feel safe, engaged, respected, and empowered to think independently and critically.

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. The results of school climate surveys of students, faculty, and parents.\(^5\)

ii. School policies regarding harassment, abuse, and bullying.

iii. School statements about diversity, equity, and inclusion and nondiscrimination.

iv. Any evidence gathered from anecdotal sources about school climate, including interviews and focused group discussions.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Prepared By:

How Prepared:


\(^5\) Examples include climate surveys developed by the National School Climate Center, the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSE), Independent School Management (ISM), or any other instrument in consultation with AIMS.
Using the information and data above, please analyze and reflect upon each of the following elements of school climate. These should be considered both by division and all school.

A. Social/Emotional Safety and Well-Being
   1. Does the school clearly and effectively communicate expectations for the physical and emotional safety of students?
   2. Do students in fact feel safe from abuse, teasing, and exclusion?
   3. Do adults feel similarly safe in the school community?

B. Teaching & Learning
   4. Please assess whether teachers support the school’s overall climate for student learning by:
      a) helping students to become independent thinkers and learn how and when to take intellectual risks;
      b) supporting the development in students of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, including effective listening, self-reflection, emotional regulation, empathy, responsibility, and ethical decision making;
      c) encouraging freedom of inquiry.  

Please provide 3-5 examples to support your answers above.

5. Describe any ways that students are involved in decision-making for the School (e.g. student government) and for their own activities (e.g. teams, clubs, and co-curricular activities).

C. Student Relationships
   6. Does the school provide opportunities for students to discuss differences among themselves, including race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion?

7. Who leads the conversations in 6 above? What training, if any, have they had in leading these kinds of discussions?

8. Has the School established a culture of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students’ success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students’ problems?

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6 “Freedom of inquiry” means giving students the latitude to pursue knowledge across a wide range of diverse opinions and perspectives; and encouraging them to be curious about their world, to be independent thinkers, and to consider alternative points of view. This intellectual freedom presupposes a school that also teaches students to respect those who hold differing opinions and who may come from backgrounds and experiences different from their own.
D. **Institutional Environment**

9. Using climate survey data and other appropriate information, please assess whether adults share a vision for a positive school climate that supports student learning and healthy development. What are the elements of that shared vision?

10. Do the adults support a learning community through their own ongoing professional development? Please give examples.

11. Do adults effectively work and learn together? Please give examples.

12. Does the school provide opportunities for adults to discuss differences among themselves, including racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, sexuality, and religious? Please tell us how and when these conversations take place.

13. Please explore whether and to what extent the School’s climate is consistent with its stated mission. Are there areas of inconsistency? Are there areas of especially strong consistency?

14. Please use Appendix J to review the School’s answers to questions about DEI throughout the self-study. Based on those answers, consider whether the School’s climate is inclusive and safe for all members of the school community, consistent with its stated mission and DEI statement (if applicable).

3. **SUMMARY OF SECTION**

   Please identify strengths by division and whole school and areas for improvement based on the answers above.

   Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
VI. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

A. COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>Percent of Student Body Now</th>
<th>Percent of Student Body 3 Years Ago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign National (Not US Citizen)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

7 For Schools that define diversity to include groups in addition to racial/ethnic classifications, please construct a chart that reflects this diversity.
A. History and Culture

In this subsection, the School is asked to think carefully about its history and culture. Culture refers to a school’s history and traditions, and its aspirations and expectations as reflected in its stated mission. (Compare the definition of climate in the section on School Climate.)

1. Briefly describe the history of the School, including any events and/or changes that had a significant effect on 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. Please explore whether and to what extent the School’s culture is consistent with its stated mission. Are there areas of inconsistency? Are there areas of especially strong consistency?

B. Students

Please use the student body composition chart above whenever possible in answering the questions below.

4. Describe the School’s philosophy regarding socio-economic, ethnic and racial diversity. (Please also use financial aid data to answer this question.)

5. Describe any significant changes in the ethnic composition of the student body in recent years. Describe and discuss any unusual circumstances.

6. 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?

7. How does the racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body compare to that of the local community?

8. Describe the School’s efforts to achieve and maintain a diverse student body.

9. What are the arrangements for the orientation of new students?

10. 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?
C. 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.

11. Describe how parents are involved in the life of the School.

12. In what ways are parents informed about the School’s DEI goals? How are parents involved in supporting these efforts at the School?

13. In what ways are families with varied backgrounds supported?

14. 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 process to address parent concerns?

15. 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 audit 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 demographic diversity, are Parents Association meetings and events designed to be appropriate for people of different socio-economic, cultural, and racial backgrounds?

16. What are the strengths of the School’s relationship with its parents? What are the areas for improvement? How might the relationship be strengthened in the future?

D. 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.

17. Do alumni support and/or participate in the life of the School? If so, in what way and to what effect?

18. Does alumni leadership reflect the diversity of the School? What efforts are in place to involve racially and ethnically diverse alumni?
19. Describe those resources, if any, that serve the alumni (e.g. use of facilities, special recognition, etc.)

20. Does the School maintain an alumni database? If so, how is it used? Comment on how the School gathers and circulates alumni news.

21. 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?

22. 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?

23. What are the strengths of the School’s relationships with alumni, extended family and friends? What are the areas for improvement? How might these relationships be strengthened in the future?

E. The School Within Its Larger Community

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.

24. What is the community within which the School has a perceptible effect and which in turn has a perceptible effect on the School?

25. What are the interactions of the School community with outside agencies and institutions?

26. Does the School have a commitment to being a good neighbor? What does that mean in practical terms?

27. 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

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action.
VII. BOARDING & HOMESTAY

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:
 i. Provide a chart showing adult boarding coverage for a seven-day period.
 ii. Provide a list showing the years of boarding experience of all dorm parents.
 iii. Homestay student handbook, if available.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

BOARDING

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

B. Curriculum

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

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

10. What leadership opportunities are available to students? How are students trained to assume leadership?
11. How does the School support students as they address issues of sexuality and gender identity?

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

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

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

C. **Boarding/Day Integration**

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

16. 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**

17. Describe social events and special programs which are offered.

18. What is the availability of academic facilities on evenings and weekends?

19. How are “short breaks” handled for students who are unable to go home?

20. How does the School provide for the needs of international students and students receiving financial aid?

21. Describe the supports that are in place for international students.

22. What provision is made for travel to and from home?

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

A. General Information

1. How many homestay students are enrolled in the school?

2. What are their native countries?

3. What tuition does the school charge for these students? How does tuition for these students compare to day student tuition at comparable grade level?

4. What percentage of total enrollment is comprised of homestay students?

B. Financial/Legal

5. What are the contractual arrangements:
   
a. Between the school and the students’ families.

b. Between the school and US host families?

c. Is a third-party involved? If so, who is it and what contractual agreements are in place?

d. Who at the school assures compliance with federal immigration laws?

e. Who controls issuance of I-20s? The school or the agent, if there is one?

6. How has the school covered potential liability related to the enrollment of homestay students?

f. 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?

7. What arrangements are in place to guide the school’s relationship with host families:

f. For health insurance for these students?

h. For any liability to the school growing out of negligence or intentional misconduct by the host family?

i. Does the School review insurance coverages in place for homestay parents?

7. What arrangements are in place to guide the school’s relationship with host families:

j. How are families chosen? Is there a screening process?

k. Does the school have formal written expectations of student host families?

l. 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?

m. By whom are host families compensated? How much?
8. 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?

C. Admission

9. How and by whom are homestay students recruited to the school?

10. 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?

11. Has the school established an upper limit for the percentage of homestay students it will accept? If so, please explain the rationale.

12. What is the school’s policy regarding financial aid for homestay students?

D. Academic

13. How are course placement decisions made, especially for students who need ESL?

14. What academic support is available to international students? Have staff been specially trained to understand and address the culturally diverse needs of international students?

15. Does the school teach ESL? Is an ESL curriculum in place?

E. Student Life

16. Is counseling support available to homestay students? If so, have counselors been specially trained to understand and address the needs of these students?

17. How are students helped to understand the school’s culture? How are they integrated into the social life of the school?

18. In what ways has the school’s culture been affected by homestay students?

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
VIII. COUNSELING

This section explores formal counseling, as distinct from the informal counseling activities by classroom teachers explored in Teaching and Learning. For schools without formal counselors on staff, please indicate that below and, if appropriate, refer to answers in Teaching and Learning that may also serve as answers to any of the questions below.

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:
- A statement describing the procedures in place for the confidential handling of student records.
- School profile (secondary Schools only).

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

A. Academic

1. Describe the School’s academic counseling for Upper School students (if applicable). What support procedures are in place for all students? Differentiate groups and ages as appropriate.

2. What is done if a student experiences academic difficulty or needs enrichment?

3. Describe how an Upper School student’s educational program is developed (if applicable). 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 the student’s special academic needs?

5. From the standpoint of academic counseling, have the needs of the students changed in the past five years? If so, do these changes reflect different admission standards? Other factors? Has the School climate changed appreciably during this period of time?

6. Please analyze how school counselors have adapted to any changes identified in 5 above.

7. 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?

8. 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?
9. 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

10. 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, gender identity, social media education, and substance abuse.

11. Does the School employ a psychologist or similar resource? Describe procedures for involvement and the extent of services provided.

12. What is done if a student experiences emotional difficulty? What resources outside the School are used to support students academically, socially and emotionally?

13. What is the School’s policy regarding the confidentiality and dissemination of counseling information about students?

14. From the standpoint of social and emotional counseling, have the needs of the students changed in the past five years? If so, do these changes reflect different admission standards? Changes in the wider culture? Other factors?

15. Please analyze how school counselors have adapted to any changes identified in 5 above.

C. Behavior and Discipline

16. What is the School’s philosophy regarding discipline?

17. Describe the School’s policies and procedures relative to a student’s behavior.

18. How are students and parents made aware of policies and rules regarding behavior?

19. Describe the School’s policies, if any, regarding student behavior at off campus activities sponsored and not sponsored by the School.

D. Outplacement Counseling

20. 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?

21. For secondary Schools, describe procedures and preparation for college entrance examinations.

22. Secondary Schools should describe staffing and procedures for the college counseling and application process.
3. **SUMMARY OF SECTION**

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
IX. PERSONNEL

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.

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. Faculty salary scale or range.

ii. Faculty benefits description.

iii. Sample written agreement for the employment of teachers.

iv. Job descriptions of administrators.

v. Other job descriptions, if available.

vi. Criminal background check letters (Maryland Schools only). For Schools in DC, evidence that it conducts background checks for all employees.

vii. 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.
1. The School employs qualified personnel without regard to race, color, ethnic background, or national origin. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

2. Salaries and benefits are administered in a clearly articulated manner for:
   - teaching faculty ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work
   - non-teaching staff ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work
   - administrators ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

3. There is a clearly stated retirement plan. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

4. There is a stated and understood policy on sick days. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

5. There is a stated and understood policy on personal days. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

6. There is a stated and understood policy on sabbaticals. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

7. There is a stated and understood family leave policy. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

8. Additional employment policies are clearly stated. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

9. There is an understood, written policy for the regular evaluation of faculty and administrators. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

10. There is an understood policy for non-renewal and termination of employment. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

11. There is a professional development program. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

12. There is an orientation program for new faculty. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

13. There is an on-going mentoring program for new faculty. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

14. There is a clearly stated non-harassment policy. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work

15. Roles and responsibilities are clearly stated and understood. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Needs Work
A. From the annual AIMS statistical survey, please attach Schedule 2: Faculty Count & Salaries (See Sample Appendix L).

B. Please provide the data requested below.

GENDER (%)
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary

AGE (%)
- 25-35 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 RACICAL COMPOSITION (%)
- African American
- Asian American
- Caucasian
- Latino/Hispanic American
- Native American
- Middle Eastern American
- Multiracial American

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION
a. Describe the benefits offered and any variations among employee groups. Attach documentation.

b. What benchmarks does the School use to set its benefits program? How does the benefits package compare to these benchmarks? What aspects of the package would the School like to enhance or change?

8 For Schools that define diversity to include groups in addition to racial/ethnic/gender/age classifications, please construct a chart that reflects this diversity.
c. 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.

d. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the communication between and among administrators?

e. Provide comprehensive written job descriptions of the roles of administrators, and others, including faculty, if available.

f. 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?

g. Does the administrative leadership team reflect the diversity within the greater School community? What efforts have been made to diversify the administrative leadership team?

h. Please describe how the School performs due diligence by investigating the backgrounds of prospective employees. What methods does the School use to be as certain as possible that prospective employees are highly qualified and appropriate to supervise students?

i. Have there been significant changes in the composition of the faculty in the last five years? If so, please describe them.

j. Analyze the composition of the faculty in light of the School’s philosophy, culture, DEI goals and/or DEI statement, if it has one, and the needs of its students.

k. Describe how the School would like the composition of the faculty to be different and how the School plans to effect these changes.

l. For each of the last five years, please list the average percentage increase and the range of the percentage increase in faculty salaries.

m. Describe the School’s system for determining faculty salaries and the annual increases.

n. Explain the rationale for this system. Analyze its strengths and weaknesses in light of the School’s mission and operational needs.

o. What benchmarks does the School use to set faculty salaries?

p. What salary goals does the Board of Trustees have for the faculty and administration?

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
X. ADMISSION, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, ADVANCEMENT, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This section requires the analysis of school operations in two ways: within and across areas of responsibility. Sections A-D will feel familiar as each department analyzes its own practice. Section E is new in that it requires the administrators responsible for Admission, Marketing, Financial Assistance, Advancement, and Finance to work together to answer questions about the school’s financial sustainability.

A. ADMISSION AND MARKETING

The assignment of marketing responsibilities will vary by school. While some schools employ full time marketing professionals, others ask the Admission or Advancement Director to oversee those efforts. The responsibility for answering questions below related to marketing should follow each school’s staffing pattern.

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. 5-year comparisons of enrollment by division, number of completed applications, acceptances as a percentage of applications, and newly enrolled students as a percentage of applications.

ii. 5-year comparisons of student diversity by division.

iii. 5-year comparisons of student attrition by division.

iv. Copies of all materials used in the current year in the admission process, including application form, viewbook, etc.

v. Copies of all current marketing materials.

vi. Evidence of non-discrimination in all admission literature, including the school website.

vii. Admission policies and procedures, 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.

vii. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION
a. Please provide a brief overview of admission and marketing, including organization and staffing, and volunteers, if applicable.

b. Using the information and data provided in 2A above, analyze school enrollment the past five years, paying particular attention to significant changes – in enrollment, applications, and yield; in student composition, including gender, race, and ethnicity; in acceptance rates; and in attrition rates. If the school enrolls boarding or homestay students, include here any trends involving those students, and please also complete Section VII.

c. Compare and contrast the school’s admission and retention data in the above analysis to AIMS admission statistics for comparable schools. Please compare data for overall enrollment trends, attrition, completed applications, acceptances as a percentage of applications, and newly enrolled students as a percentage of applications.

d. How has the school’s “market” changed in the past five to ten years? Analyze and interpret information about demographics, family financial needs, competition from other schools, and other factors you deem important. How do admission and marketing professionals stay abreast of these changes on an ongoing basis? How do current admission and marketing strategies address these changes?

e. How and by whom are budgeted enrollment targets established each year? How are these targets informed by data, both internal and external?

f. What admission efforts are made each year to increase (or maintain) a diverse student body?

g. Please analyze the admission decision-making process: Who is involved? What student information is used? What steps are taken to assure that admission decisions are aligned a) with the needs of each child, and b) the training and experience of the faculty?

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

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9 Please use the most recent AIMS school data in the Enrollment schedule. If the School does not have a copy, please contact the office.
B. **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

1. **PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING**

Prepared By: 

How Prepared: 

**Required Documents:**  

i. 5-year comparisons of financial assistance by category: need-based, merit, discounts.\(^\text{10}\)  

ii. 5-Year comparisons of assistance recipients: by grade, ethnicity, and annual family income.  

iii. Copies of all materials used in the financial aid process.  

iv. Financial assistance policies, including preferences as listed under Required Documents vii, (above).  

v. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

2. **SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION**

a. Please provide a brief overview of the administration of financial assistance, including organization and staffing.

b. Using the data provided above, analyze changes in financial assistance requests and awards in the past five to ten years. Please be certain to include an analysis of the use of all forms of assistance, including merit awards and tuition discounts.

c. How is financial need calculated? Is the need formula ever adjusted? If so, under what circumstances and by whom? Do awards ever exceed demonstrated need? If so, when and under what circumstances?

d. How are financial assistance decisions made? Who is involved?

e. What steps are taken to assure confidentiality of the process?

f. How are financial assistance budgets established? As a % gross tuition? On a net-tuition basis? By some other method?

g. Please analyze the 5-year data presented in A and B above in terms of impact on student body composition over time.

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\(^{10}\) Discounts are non-need reductions in tuition made on an *ad hoc* basis. They are to be distinguished from merit awards, which are based upon pre-determined criteria.
3. SUMMARY OF SECTION

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

C. INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:
How Prepared:
Required Documents:
i. 5-Year comparisons of annual giving

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

a. Please provide a brief overview of fundraising activities, organization and staffing, including volunteers. Be sure to include the Annual Fund, capital and endowment, planned giving, special events, etc.

b. For the Annual Fund over the past five years, please compare the percentage of each year’s total received from a) gifts above $2,500, b) gifts $1,000 to $2,500, and c) below $1,000. Have the percentages changed? If so, why? Please also compare participation rates by constituency. Are there significant changes over the past five years?

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION

Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

D. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:
How Prepared:
Required Documents:
i. Please complete management dashboard below:

(a) Business and tax records (e.g. 990, 5500, ERISA, COBRA) are well-kept and available.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

(b) The School annually engages an independent auditor to prepare audited financial statements in compliance with GAAP standards.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

(c) The School has appropriate procedures for the management of its financial resources including:

i. Budget making.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

ii. Accounting for all funds of the School.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

iii. Long-range financial planning.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

iv. The Head, Board of Trustees and Heads of Divisions are kept fully informed about their financial areas of responsibility.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

v. Sufficient property and liability insurance is maintained.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

vi. 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.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

vii. The School offers an equitable tuition refund insurance plan or has a procedure for the adjustment of parent/guardian financial obligations.  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Needs Work

i. Completed dashboard for the current fiscal year that uses the following document (which can be opened in Google Docs or downloaded as an Excel document):  
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VD5URRocVx8l-RZz5zg6XW_f3t7OAb_/view?usp=sharing

ii. Independent audit, notes, and management letter for the most recent fiscal year.

iii. Current Board-approved operating budget.

iv. Sample reporting package to Head of School and Board Treasurer.

v. Three-year financial plan, if required.11

vi. Written personnel policies, including employee handbook.

vii. Faculty salary scale or range.

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11 This topic is covered during the Design Conference. However, if the School is uncertain whether or not it is required to provide this item of documentation, please contact the AIMS office.
viii. 5-year comparisons of total revenue, total expense (exclude non-cash items, like depreciation, if unfunded), and net surplus or deficit.

ix. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Revenue and Expenses
a. 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?

b. 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?

c. 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).

d. Describe the policies and procedures for collection of past due accounts.

e. 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? In light of the school’s Statements of Philosophy and Diversity statements, are there any guiding principles that govern investment of endowment funds?

f. What are the policies for the School to take income from the endowment and other sources such as Annual Giving? Who sets those policies?

g. How much and what kind of federal, state or local government funds does the School receive?

h. 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.

i. Summarize the School’s property and liability insurance coverage.

j. Describe the provisions for funding additions and replacement of capital assets.

k. Describe and assess effectiveness of the School’s cash management.

l. Describe the procedures for evaluating and purchasing employee benefits.
m. Describe the procedures for evaluating and responding to regulatory requirements and changes (e.g. COBRA, ERISA, ADA, Family and Medical Leave Act).

n. What procedures are in place for the review of insurance coverage in case of liability related to student travel overseas? For the review of liability waivers?

o. 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?

p. What institutional financial resources has the School committed to support a diverse school population? Are these resources adequate to implement the School’s DEI goals?

q. 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.

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above.
Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

E. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Administrators responsible for Admission, Marketing, Financial Aid, Institutional Advancement, and Finance should work as a team to provide answers in this section.

1. How do you stay informed about the strategic environment?

2. Discuss among yourselves and share with us your list of the 3-5 most important strategic challenges to the school’s future financial sustainability, both educational and financial.

3. Do these big-picture challenges inform your planning? If so, how? If not, why not?

4. As a team, create a “stress test” of the operating budget assuming a worst-case scenario that focuses on the School’s particular vulnerabilities.\(^{12}\) Develop three-year budget projections assuming a net revenue decline of at least 25%. (You may wish to modify the 3-year projections provided in Document F above.)

5. What can be learned from the “stress test”? Example questions might include: Are the School’s cash reserves adequate? Is the School’s student-faculty ratio sustainable? Is the School’s reliance on annual giving appropriate and sustainable compared to other comparable independent schools?

SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above.
Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?

\(^{12}\) Examples might include a decision by a foreign country to cancel student visas; a sudden and precipitous decline in domestic enrollment; a dramatic shock to the US or global financial system.
SELF-DESIGNED QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)
With prior approval from AIMS during the Design Conference, the Directors of Admission and Development and the Business Manager may elect to develop 3-4 questions related to long-term (at least 3 years) school financial sustainability that have particular significance for their areas of school operation, and to substitute these self-designed questions for questions in E above (except question 4, which must be completed by all schools). Self-designed questions must be pre-approved by AIMS. Please refer to Section XIII. OPTIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS for suggestions.
XI. HEALTH

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:
   I. Health forms.
   II. Immunization forms.
   III. Emergency Information sheets.
   IV. Medical Release.
   V. First Aid Procedures.
   VI. School’s Health policies and procedures.
   VII. Medication policies, including medication assistant training.
   VIII. Special health problems list.
   IX. Blood-borne Pathogen Plan.
   X. Medical Emergency Plan.

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

a. How does the provision of health services reflect the School’s mission?

b. How does the School define its responsibility for the provision of health services?

c. 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?

d. What facilities are available for health services? Are they adequate for the student body? Are they accessible?

e. Is there a budget for health services? Is it adequate?
f. How is the School prepared to handle a medical emergency? Please include answers to the following:

i. How are injuries or medical emergencies handled at the School?
ii. Are emergency information and medical releases available for all students? Are they accessible to authorized personnel on a need-to-know basis?
iii. Provide a list of personnel qualified to administer first aid. Who provides their training?
iv. Are emergency supplies/first aid kits readily available? Where are they located?
v. Does the individual responsible for providing health services analyze the Crisis Management Plan as it pertains to medical/health issues?

g. How are medications and emergency supplies stored?

h. If a boarding school, who is responsible for administering medications after regular school hours?

i. What health information is required from students annually?

j. How does the School store student health information?

k. How is health care documented?

l. Does the School maintain a list of special health concerns, including food allergies, for students? How are student health concerns communicated to faculty and administration?

m. 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?

n. 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.

o. How do School personnel stay informed about the latest research regarding concussions, allergies, and other student health issues?

p. What procedures and policies are in place regarding concussions?

q. 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.

r. Indicate below what periodic health screenings are administered and by whom:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y/N</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Hearing</td>
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<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Other, specify</td>
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7.0 Approved 2015  Self-Study Guide updated 2019
5. What are the School’s policies with regard to serious or communicable illness?

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above. Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
XII. PLANT, INSTITUTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, SAFETY, AND TRANSPORTATION

1. PRELIMINARY PHASE: INFORMATION & DATA GATHERING

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

Required Documents:

i. Fire drill procedures.
ii. Log of fire drills conducted during the preceding twelve months.
iii. Record of fire marshal visits
iv. Evacuation plans.
v. Building floor plans and campus map.
vi. Crisis management plan, including lockdown and sheltering in place.
vii. Data storage and retention policies.
viii. Please use the grid below to evaluate campus facilities. For any that are inadequate or need significant work, please explain and tell us what plans are in place to address the problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Building/Facility</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>Needs Significant Work</th>
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ix. 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 Vehicles ______%  
- Contracted Buses ______%

2. SELF-STUDY PHASE: ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

A. Institutional Technology

1. How is electronic data backed-up and protected from unauthorized access?
2. What procedures are in place to all electronic personal information?
3. What protocols are in place should the school experience a network disaster?

B. Transportation

4. 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?
5. What is the School’s policy regarding parents and/or employees driving children to activities and events, both in their own vehicles and in those owned by the school? Does the school review driving records of these parents in advance?

C. Safety

6. Are fire drill instructions posted in each classroom? How often has the School conducted unannounced fire drills in the past 12 months?
7. 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)?
8. What other specific safety measures have been taken by the School?
9. What security measures are provided for the campus and individual buildings (e.g. security guards, restricted building access, employee identification, visitors badges, campus lighting)?
10. Describe security procedures at the School for after school hours, weekends and specifically related to a boarding program, if offered.

11. 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?

12. Describe the School’s procedures for handling hazardous materials such as laboratory and industrial chemicals.

13. Describe the procedures for regular review of risk management policies.

14. 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.

15. Describe the School’s practice regarding traffic safety on and adjacent to the campus.

16. Describe the School’s practice procedures regarding the dismissal of students during the School day.

3. SUMMARY OF SECTION
Please identify strengths and areas for improvement based on the answers above.
Based on these findings what suggestions can be made for future action?
XIII. OPTIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS

In some cases, it may be appropriate for a School to develop its own self-study questions, in consultation with AIMS at the Design Conference. Where self-designed questions are used in the self-study, in most cases they should substitute for other self-study questions, so that the school is not asked to do more work. One approach to the development of optional questions is presented below.

AIMS encourages schools to use the accreditation process to go beyond the analysis of compartmentalized functions, and to gain deeper insights from a more holistic view of the school as a system of relationships, both organizational and personal, that is dynamic and fluid. Moreover, the complexity of the strategic educational environment will increasingly require schools to utilize cross-disciplinary thinking and problem solving. The themes and relationships diagramed below and the inquiries suggested are examples intended to spark deeper thinking.

### Suggested Areas of Inquiry

- Compare and contrast the strategic challenges identified by the Board of Trustees and the administration in Section X (E). Also, compare and contrast those to the faculty’s list of essential student skills in Section IV. Are these aligned? If not, what accounts for the different perspectives?

- Does the school provide occasional opportunities for these three groups to jointly discuss the strategic environment?

- Taken as a whole, does the school’s self-study support the conclusion that strategic thinking and planning is taking place at all levels of school organization? If not, what steps might the school take to strengthen this essential institutional capacity?

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13 See *A Failure of Nerve* by Edwin Friedman (Seabury Books 2007), especially Chapter 3.
Suggested Areas of Inquiry

- Have a conversation about whether financial pressures have led to changing admission standards, and how those changes may have affected school climate and the roles of teachers and counselors.

- From the perspective of students, how have changes in enrollment composition changed their experiences?

- From the perspectives of teachers and counselors, are all segments of the student body well served by the educational program of the School?
Suggested Areas of Inquiry

- Compare perspectives on the school’s diversity among trustees, teachers, and administrative leaders. Is there basic alignment?
- What are the limits of diversity at your school? Are those limits philosophical? Educational? Social? Is there a common understanding among the various school constituencies?
- Do the school’s guiding documents reflect the school’s actual commitment to DEI? Has the school been explicit with parents about its commitment to DEI?
Suggested Areas of Inquiry

- Discuss the implications of the budget “stress test” in Section X (E) of the self-study in terms of teaching and learning, and school climate. Compare perspectives among teachers, trustees, and administrative leaders.
XIV. SUMMARY

Prepared By:

How Prepared:

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.
AIMS Accreditation Standards

The Committee chair should place a ‘P’ beside each Passed standard; an ‘NP’ beside each standard that is Not Passed; or a ‘PM’ beside each standard that Passed with a Mandate.

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 follows the AIMS Principles of Good Practice. (See AIMS Website under Policy and Advisory Statements).

_____ 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. ¹

* Standards marked with an * are considered Foundational Standards.

¹ 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.
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, equity, and inclusion, 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.

**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, fostering a multicultural understanding of global citizenship.

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 engage 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 principle 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 thorough reference and background checks for all employees before the first day of employment in compliance with all applicable local laws and regulations, including the provisions of MD HB 486.²

**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.

² Maryland House Bill 486 applies only to Maryland schools.
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 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 (Committee Chair) _____________________________ Date _________________

amended 2019 Standards 5
Local Standards for Schools in Maryland

The Committee chair should place a ‘P’ beside each Passed standard; an ‘NP’ beside each standard that is Not Passed; or a ‘PM’ beside each standard that Passed with a Mandate.

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, and the provisions of HB-486.

_____ 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 school shall have an administrative head who is responsible for the day–to–day administration of the school.

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

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

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.

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.

A teacher in a Montessori school shall also hold a Montessori teacher credential appropriate for the level of assignment.

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

The educational program of a school shall operate consistently with its statement of purposes.

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.
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.

A school shall maintain at the school and own a library media collection to support and supplement the implementation of the written curriculum.

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

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

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.

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.
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.

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.

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.

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 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 school shall give annually to parents or legal guardians of prospective and enrolled students the written schedule of its school day.

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.

The calendar for a kindergarten, elementary school, or secondary school shall provide for at least 170 days for the implementation of the educational program.

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 (Committee Chair) ___________________________ Date ________________
Local Standards for Schools in the District of Columbia

*The Committee chair should place a 'P' beside each passed Standard, an 'NP' beside each Standard that is Not Passed, or a 'PM' beside any Standard Passed with a Mandate.*

**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.
Appendix A

DECENNIAL ACCREDITATION 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 Committee Visit _____________________________

Please check ONE: [AIMS-Only] □ Edition 6.6 □ Edition 7.0*
□ AIMS/MSA □ MSA-Only

*For schools opting to use 7.0, please reach out to the AIMS Director of Accreditation to schedule a Design Conference 3-6 months into the Self-Study process at the conclusion of Phase One. Please indicate semester and year of Design Conference: _____________________________

If MSA only, please tell us which MSA instrument: □ DoF □ ExBD □ SE

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 and Standard 1.7.

Signed (Head of School) _______________________________ Date ____________________

Email _______________________________ Phone ____________________

Mailing Address ___________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

ESTIMATED COSTS WORKSHEET

1. Cost of housing $_____/night x three nights x _____ Committee members

2. Travel at current IRS rate/mile at average 100 miles round trip
   x _____ team members

3. Cost of a substitute (average $100.00/day) $_____ x three days
   x _____ teachers

4. Meals/day $_____ x three days x _____ Committee members

5. Cost of social gathering on Day 1

6. Extra Administrative help – Number of hours _____ x $_____/hour

7. MSA fee, if a joint evaluation

8. Costs for the training session (Substitutes, travel, and lunch x number
   of Committee members)

9. Computer costs, if rentals are needed

10. Costs of printing/copying Self-Study Report

Total $________

Recent surveys reveal that a school’s average cost for #1 -- #4 (above) equals approximately $1200 for each Visiting Committee member.
Appendix C

RECOMMENDED EVALUATION SCHEDULE

18 to 24 months before visit:

1. Register for evaluation with AIMS
2. Plan the scheduling and staffing for the evaluation
3. Complete Phase I: Data & Information Gathering
4. Hold Design Conference (see Appendix D)

12 to 18 months before visit:

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

6 months before visit:

1. Begin presentation of Self-Study committee reports to full faculty.
2. Plan for Chair’s Four-Month visit.

4 months before visit:

1. Hold Four-Month Visit with the Chair.
2. Chair reviews the rough draft of the report.
3. Plan for Visiting Committee orientation session and Chair’s second visit to the School (4-6 weeks before the visit).

2 months before visit:

1. Finalize and digitally copy completed Self-Study.

6 weeks to 1 month before visit:

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

1. Visiting Committee Report is received by the 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 Visiting Committee Report.
Appendix D

DESIGN CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

_____ Preliminary Review of and Compliance with Standards
_____ Choice of Guiding Document (Mission Statement)
_____ Organization of curriculum and co-curriculum and options for presentation
_____ 3-Year Teaching and Learning Data
_____ Optional Teaching and Learning Questions
_____ Review of School’s Financial Position
_____ Optional Financial Sustainability Questions
_____ Review of the School’s Strategic Outlook (as it may affect areas of focus and emphasis in the Self-Study and during the Committee visit)
Appendix E

SUGGESTED VISITING COMMITTEE WORK SCHEDULE

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

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

Day 2 of Evaluation
1. Classroom visitation throughout school day.
2. Short full Committee 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. Committee dinner.
8. Full Committee 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. Committee meeting after lunch.
5. Committee dinner.
6. Full Committee meeting. Presentation of subcommittee progress reports. Preparation of the final report in areas of full Committee 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 Committee or need more in-depth study.
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

COURSE DESCRIPTION FORM
(Curriculum Inventory)

General Information

1. Course name
2. Grade level & division
3. Number of teachers
4. Frequency & duration of class meetings
5. Range of size classes

Skills Mastered

1. _________
2. _________
3. _________
4. _________

Habits of Mind Fostered

1. _________
2. _________
3. _________
4. _________

Resources Used

1. _________
2. _________
3. _________
4. _________

Essential Content Covered

1. _________
2. _________
3. _________
4. _________
Appendix G

VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT FORMAT

The Visiting Committee 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. For detailed instructions in the preparation of the Report, please see Evaluation Procedures p. 11.

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 one-half page.

SECOND PARAGRAPH
The second paragraph should briefly compare the Committee’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, the Committee 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 PHASE ONE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

This schedule is a convenient check–list of documentation required by Phase One of 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 digital copy for AIMS and each member of the Visiting Committee

___ Certificate of Approval or Exemption Letter for religious schools. (MD schools only.)

___ Non–discrimination policy

___ License for Nursery and/or Before/After School Child Care

Core Mission and Values

i. A copy of the existing mission statement, either revised and approved by the Board, or re-ratified by the Board if not revised.

ii. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Statement, if applicable.

iii. Other guiding documents, if applicable: vision, philosophy, core principles.

iv. If community surveys or questionnaires were used, please indicate and document.

v. A brief narrative description of the School’s history, including any significant changes affecting the course of its history.

Governance

i. Board Roster

ii. By-Laws

iii. Conflict of Interest Policy

iv. Most Recent Strategic Plan

v. Redacted Head Employment Contract

vi. Description of Head Evaluation Process
vii. Most Recent Audit & Management Letter

viii. Board Self-Evaluation Instrument

ix. Board Composition Summary

Teaching and Learning

i. The School’s presentation of the curriculum should be sufficiently accurate and thorough to support the following broad institutional objectives: 1) ongoing analysis of horizontal and vertical cohesion and balance; 2) accurate communication about the educational program to parents and the wider public; and 3) continuity of the educational program over time. Schools should present their educational programs in one of the following ways:
   a) Course descriptions
   b) Scope and sequence
   c) Curriculum map
   d) Program inventory (See Appendix F)

ii. A presentation of the School’s co-curriculum, in outline form.

iii. 3-Year longitudinal assessments (aggregated by division) of learning in math, English or language arts, and one other discipline to be chosen by the School.

iv. A statement explaining how and how frequently overall instructional effectiveness by division is assessed. Be certain to explain whether and how aggregated student outcomes are used in this process and if not, why not.

v. A complete list of faculty and administration by division, including degrees and years of experience.

vi. A copy of the school’s written faculty and administration evaluation policy, and evidence of its regular and systematic implementation.

vii. Faculty attrition rates for the past five years by division.

viii. A statement enumerating the School’s diversity goals as they pertain to teaching and learning, including students, teachers, curriculum content, and pedagogy.

ix. Childcare license, if applicable.

x. A copy of the School’s Acceptable Use Policy

xi. Demonstration of compliance with applicable local and AIMS Standards.

xii. Upper School graduation requirements, if applicable.

School Climate

i. The results of school climate surveys of students, faculty, and parents.

ii. School policies regarding harassment, abuse, and bullying.
iii. School statements about diversity and nondiscrimination.

iv. Any evidence gathered from anecdotal sources about school climate, including interviews and focused group discussions.

**School and Community**

i. Composition of Student Body (see table in Self-Study)

**Boarding & Homestay**

i. Provide a chart showing adult boarding coverage for a seven day period.

ii. Provide a list showing the years of boarding experience of all dorm parents.

iii. Homestay student handbook, if available.

**Counseling**

i. A statement describing the procedures in place for the confidential handling of student records.

ii. School profile (secondary Schools only).

**Personnel**

i. Faculty salary scale or range.

ii. Faculty benefits description.

iii. Sample written agreement for the employment of teachers.

iv. Job descriptions of administrators.

v. Other job descriptions, if available.

vi. Criminal background check letters (Maryland Schools only). For Schools in DC, evidence that it conducts background checks for all employees.

vii. 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. (See chart in Self-Study)

viii. From the annual AIMS statistical survey, please attach Schedule 2: Faculty Count & Salaries.

ix. Please provide the data requested below. (see chart in Self-Study)
Admission, Financial Assistance, Advancement, Financial Management, Sustainability

Admission and Marketing

i. 5-year comparisons of enrollment by division, number of completed applications, acceptances as a percentage of applications, and newly enrolled students as a percentage of applications.

ii. 5-year comparisons of student diversity by division.

iii. 5-year comparisons of student attrition by division.

iv. Copies of all materials used in the current year in the admission process, including application form, viewbook, etc.

v. Copies of all current marketing materials.

vi. Evidence of non-discrimination in all admission literature, including the school website.

vii. Admission policies, including student preferences.

viii. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

Financial Assistance

i. 5-year comparisons of financial assistance by category: need-based, merit, discounts.

ii. 5-Year comparisons of assistance recipients: by grade, ethnicity, and annual family income.

iii. Copies of all materials used in the financial aid process.

iv. Financial assistance policies, including preferences.

v. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

Institutional Advancement

i. 5-Year comparisons of annual giving

Financial Management

i. Please complete management dashboard (see Self-Study)

ii. Completed dashboard for the current fiscal year. (Available online at AIMS website)

iii. Independent audit, notes, and management letter for the most recent fiscal year.

iv. Current Board-approved operating budget.

v. Sample reporting package to Head of School and Board Treasurer.

vi. Three-year financial plan, if required.

vii. Written personnel policies, including employee handbook.
viii. Faculty salary scale or range.

ix. 5-year comparisons of total revenue, total expense (exclude non-cash items, like depreciation, if unfunded), and net surplus or deficit.

x. Evidence that the school is in compliance with applicable Standards.

Health

i. Health forms.

ii. Immunization forms.

iii. Emergency Information sheets.

iv. Medical Release.

v. First Aid Procedures.

vi. School’s Health policies and procedures.

vii. Medication policies, including medication assistant training.

viii. Policy to comply with medication assistant training.

ix. Special health problems list.


xi. Medical Emergency Plan.

Plant, Institutional Technology, Safety, and Transportation

i. Fire drill procedures.

ii. Log of fire drills conducted during the preceding twelve months.

iii. Record of fire marshal visits.

iv. Evacuation plans.

v. Building floor plans and campus map.

vi. Crisis management plan, including lockdown and sheltering in place.

vii. Data storage and retention policies.

viii. Please use the grid below to evaluate campus facilities. As to any that are inadequate or need significant work, please explain and tell us what plans are in place to address the problems. (see grid in Self-Study)

For the Visiting Committee

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 areas for improvement for each subject area in the Teaching and Learning section.
Appendix J

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) QUESTIONS

DEI questions found throughout the Self-Study Guide are compiled in this appendix as a way to help the School and Visiting Committee to focus on this area, to assess school-wide diversity practice, and, if appropriate, to help the Committee make diversity commendations and recommendations.

Governance

3. Please analyze the Board’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to recommendations made in the AIMS Statement on Diversity. (See document available on the AIMS website.)

Teaching and Learning

7. Are different cultures and perspectives represented across the curriculum? Please give us examples.

8. Can students see themselves in the curriculum? Again, share examples.

9. Is DEI an organic and intentional part of curriculum planning and development?

21. Have teachers been provided with training in DEI?

22. Is DEI a goal in recruiting new teachers? If so, what strategies are used to increase or maintain diversity on the faculty?

23. Please analyze ongoing efforts by the administration, including the Head of School, to accomplish the school’s DEI goals.

School Climate

6. Does the School provide opportunities for students to discuss differences among themselves, including racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender and sexuality, religious?

7. Who leads the conversations in 6 above? What training, if any, have they had in leading these kinds of discussions?

11. Does the School provide opportunities for adults to discuss differences among themselves, including race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion? Please tell us how and when these conversations take place.
13. Please use Appendix J to review the School’s answers to DEI questions throughout the Self-Study. Based on those answers, consider whether the School’s climate is inclusive and safe for all members of the school community, consistent with its stated mission and diversity statement (if applicable).

**School and Community**

4. Describe the School’s philosophy regarding socio-economic, ethnic and racial diversity. (Please also use financial aid data to answer this question.)

5. Describe any significant changes in the ethnic composition of the student body in recent years. Describe and discuss any unusual circumstances.

6. 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?

7. How does the racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body compare to that of the local community?

8. Describe the School’s efforts to achieve and maintain a diverse student body.

12. In what ways are parents informed about the School’s DEI goals? How are parents involved in supporting these efforts at the School?

13. In what ways are families with varied backgrounds supported?

18. Does alumni leadership reflect the diversity of the School? What efforts are in place to involve racially and ethnically diverse alumni?

**Personnel**

2(g) Does the administrative leadership team reflect the diversity within the greater School community? What efforts have been made to diversify the administrative leadership team?

2(j) Analyze the composition of the faculty in light of the School’s philosophy, culture, DEI goals and/or DEI statement, if it has one, and the needs of its students.

**Admission, Financial Assistance, Advancement, Financial Management, Sustainability**

**Admission and Marketing**

2(b) Using the information and data provided in IA above, analyze school enrollment the past five years, paying particular attention to significant changes – in enrollment, applications, and yield; in student composition, including gender, race, and ethnicity; in acceptance rates; and in attrition rates. If the school enrolls boarding or homestay students, include here any trends involving those students, and please also complete Section VII.
2(f) What admission efforts are made each year to increase (or maintain) a diverse student body?

Financial Management

2(p) What institutional financial resources has the School committed to support a diverse school population? Are these resources adequate to implement the School’s DEI goals?
Appendix K

Questions for Group Faculty Meetings

_____ 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 School life outside of their classrooms or offices?

_____ H. The Committee Chair may develop a question arising out of the summary issues discussed at the Day 1 evening Committee meeting.

Group Meeting 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 Committee’s first night meeting the chair will guide the Committee in selecting the questions and their order. Questions A, B, C, and D are recommended. The usefulness of questions E-H varies from school to school. The questions for the administrator’s group may need adjustment. The chair will assign two or three Committee members to each group.

- The group sessions end when all of the prepared questions have been asked or at the half hour mark, whichever comes first. The Visiting Committee may not ask any questions other than those prepared in advance in conjunction with the Chair.