



Founded 1885

New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Independent Schools

CIS Mission Statement

CIS engages member schools in a comprehensive peer review accreditation process that provides assurance of quality and serves as a catalyst for innovation, improvement and excellence.

We support the efforts of schools, with their diverse missions, to meet the current and emerging needs of their students and to achieve long-term institutional health.

As world leaders in accreditation with our partners at NEASC (founded in 1885), we promote an understanding of the changing educational landscape, and generate relevant discourse and action in the global educational community.

Core Principles

Our schools benefit from our continuous and systematic peer review accreditation process, one that integrates both internal voice and external perspective. We hold our schools responsible for improving and transforming themselves, through self-study and reflection. The ultimate objective is for our schools to design a sustainable future, which is consistent with their respective missions in serving their students, and responsive to a rapidly changing environment.

Standards for Accreditation and Indicators

Accreditation of an institution by NEASC indicates that it meets or exceeds NEASC Standards and criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer group review process. An accredited school is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation has two faces: quality assurance and school improvement. Attention to the former has proved essential in defending the independence of schools and providing relief from external regulation. The primary function of accreditation, however, is school improvement.

Independent schools must meet all fifteen Standards for Accreditation that are published here. If a school is found not to be in compliance with one or more, the Commission on Independent Schools will set a date by which the standard(s) must be met if the school is to retain its accreditation.

The Commission has established lists of “suggested indicators” for each standard that it feels represent good practices and that it encourages schools to meet. The indicators provide an excellent starting point for discussion in Standard sub-committees. Schools are not required to comply with all indicators or develop all of the “plans” that are mentioned, however, and are welcome to submit other data and information to document their compliance with the standards.

Standard 1 (Mission): There is congruence between the school’s stated mission and core values and its actual program, policies, planning, and decision-making at both the operational and governance levels.

Suggested Indicators:

- 1.a. The mission of the school is stated clearly.
- 1.b. The mission of the school is embraced by all constituencies and linked to all aspects of school operations.
- 1.c. The mission statement is reviewed regularly, using a process that involves representatives of major constituencies of the school, as appropriate.
- 1.d. The school community is engaged in reflecting on ways to enrich the application of the mission in all aspects of the program.
- 1.e. The school’s climate and culture support an effective educational program, consistent with its stated mission.
- 1.f. Requirements and expectations of students, parents, faculty, trustees, and employees clearly reflect the values and mission of the school.
- 1.g. The culture of the school reflects a commitment to implementing the mission of the school.

Standard 2 (Governance): The school has an appropriate system of governance that assures that the school remains true to its mission and that it has the necessary resources to support its present and prospective operations.

Suggested Indicators:

- 2.a. The governance of the school is clearly defined, understood by all constituents, and provides for:
 - continuity of mission
 - stability and ethical process in transitions of leadership
 - a comprehensive, multi-year planning process
 - assurance of adequate financial resources
 - institutional advancement/development
 - evaluation of and support of the professional growth of the Head of School
 - a model of inclusive behavior and integrity for the school community
 - establishing and monitoring needed school policies
 - self-evaluation of individuals and groups with governance responsibilities
 - defined orientation and evaluation procedures
- 2.b. The governing body demonstrates and clearly communicates its commitment to the mission.
- 2.c. Provision is made for participation of all constituencies in the policy-making process, as appropriate.
- 2.d. The school engages in multi-year planning.
- 2.e. There is an understood delegation of decision making that gives the Head of School the capacity to exercise effective educational leadership.

Standard 3 (Enrollment): The admissions process assures that those students who enroll are appropriate, given the school's mission, and are likely to benefit from their experience at the school.

Suggested Indicators:

- 3.a. The school in its public relations materials presents an accurate description of its mission, organization, staff, program, and facilities.
- 3.b. The mission of the school is reviewed with prospective families.
- 3.c. The school has clearly stated procedures for the admission of students, which are developmentally appropriate at different levels.
- 3.d. The school has developed a profile of its student body that defines the range and type of students suitable for admission.
- 3.e. If tuition assistance is offered, there are clearly stated policies and procedures for the application for and award of grants which are consistent with the mission of the school.
- 3.f. The school uses information concerning the performance of students and graduates in evaluating admissions procedures.
- 3.g. The school undertakes an analysis of the reasons students depart prior to graduation and uses the results to inform admissions procedures and program revisions.
- 3.h. Those responsible for admissions communicate with those responsible for the program of the school to assure that necessary resources are available to meet the needs of individual students who are admitted.
- 3.i. The admissions staff communicates regularly with the teaching faculty about the specific talents/strengths/skills/needs of newly enrolled students.

Standard 4 (Program): The school provides a comprehensive program of intellectual, aesthetic, and physical activities that is appropriate to support the school's mission and core values, and is consistent with the needs of the range of students admitted. Program planning is informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful and constructive lives.

Suggested Indicators:

- 4.a. Professional development time is used for faculty to research, study, and discuss issues of teaching and learning and the capacities students will need to develop.
- 4.b. The school's program demonstrates consideration for the appropriate intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, emotional and ethical development of students in all aspects of school and student life.
- 4.c. The curriculum demonstrates continuity from year to year.
- 4.d. The school has a policy for regularly reviewing the academic program and has completed a recent, written curriculum plan outlining desirable and/or necessary improvements.
- 4.e. Attention is paid to transitions between grade levels and/or divisions of the school so as to facilitate passage of students from one level/division to another.
- 4.f. The program offers a variety of cultural experiences to reflect (a) the diversity of students enrolled and (b) the multicultural nature of the region, country, and world.
- 4.g. The school recognizes developmental levels of children and takes them into consideration in planning the program and teaching methodologies.
- 4.h. The school evaluates the academic rigor, effectiveness, and integrity of online courses that its students take and of any online courses that the school itself offers, on a regular basis.

Standard 5 (Experience of the Students): The school actively considers individual students and has developed plans, policies, programs, and pedagogy to nurture, support, and encourage all students to reach their potential and to participate in the life of the school.

Suggested Indicators:

- 5.a. The school recognizes differences within the student body such as gender, learning style or ability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice, and actively responds to students' and adults' positive or negative experiences.
- 5.b. Time is made available on a regular basis for teachers to plan together and to discuss students (both individuals and groups).
- 5.c. Time is made available on a regular basis for teachers to learn ways in which their backgrounds help and/or hinder their ability to work with students, parents, and other adults in the community.
- 5.d. There is a procedure in place to assess and report on how individual students are meeting the goals of the program with regard to both personal and academic growth.
- 5.e. There is a process in place to see how the school's program needs to change to reflect the diversity of cultural experiences and to identify adults and/or students who will need additional support to function effectively in a pluralistic environment.
- 5.f. Resources are available to faculty (in-school or through outside consultants) to assist in identifying and meeting the needs of individual students.
- 5.g. There is a process in place to identify students who might benefit from a modification of the program.
- 5.h. There is a process in place to identify students for whom the school is inappropriate and a supportive process for counseling those students.
- 5.i. Counseling, advising, and guidance procedures and personnel address the needs of the students.
- 5.j. College or school placement counseling, as applicable, addresses the needs of the students.
- 5.k. Information is systematically gathered regarding students' experience at the school and is used to inform program planning.
- 5.l. The school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community that inspires students to respect and value diversity and to be active and responsible citizens, and has ways to insure that this objective is met.
- 5.m. The school assures that, if students take or the school offers online courses, the design and delivery of the online courses meet the needs of the students and support student-to-student and student-to-faculty interactions.

Standard 6 (Resources to Support the Program): Given the school's mission, there are adequate resources (space, equipment, technology, materials, and community) to support the school's program.

Suggested Indicators:

- 6.a. Instructional facilities (including space, furnishings, and play/recreation areas) are adequate for the instructional program and are age appropriate.
- 6.b. There are instructional materials and equipment in sufficient quality, quantity, and variety to give effective support to the aims and methods of the program.
- 6.c. The school has a library plan which is integrated with the curriculum and which provides students with age appropriate experiences in research and reading and supports the broad purposes of the educational program.

- 6.d. The school has an academic technology plan, developed by teachers and academic leaders, covering the integration of technology into the various components of the program and providing for the professional development of teachers in the implementation of this plan.
- 6.e. The school has in place an acceptable use policy of which students and families are informed, and the school provides information to students and families on the appropriate and ethical use of technology.
- 6.f. There are procedures in place to assure that teachers have a leading role in planning the use of technology in their teaching.
- 6.g. Non-academic programs, if available, are consistent with the school's mission and are well organized, supplied, and staffed.
- 6.h. The schedule is planned by day and year to provide for the total program.
- 6.i. The school interacts with the community in which it is located and avails itself of community resources.
- 6.j. The school strives to be a positive member of the community in which it exists, is sensitive to the interests of its neighbors, and takes appropriate advantage of the character of its setting.
- 6.k. The financial aid resources committed to students and their families reflect the goals and mission of the school.
- 6.l. The school has sufficient resources to support any online courses it does offer.

Standard 7 (Early Childhood Program*): The Early Childhood Program enriches the social and intellectual development of its students by providing comprehensive programs and appropriate staffing, resources and facilities.

*For NEASC accreditation, Early Childhood is defined as three-year and four-year old children. NEASC does not accredit Early Childhood Programs that serve children under the age of three. However, if schools enroll children younger than three years old, they must provide documentation attesting that those programs meet health and safety regulations/guidelines as required in your state.

Suggested Indicators:

- 7.a. Materials, routines, and procedures are organized to ensure the health and safety of young children.
- 7.b. The school communicates and collaborates with parents of children in a manner addressing the needs of this community.
- 7.c. Staff who work directly with children in the Early Childhood Program are trained in the field of early childhood education/child development. Their numbers are sufficient in relation to numbers and ages of children in each early childhood grouping to perform tasks effectively and safely.
- 7.d. The school has curricular and extra-curricular programs in place which specifically and effectively address intellectual and developmental needs of children in the Early Childhood Program and are consistent with the school's stated mission.
- 7.e. Facilities provided for the Early Childhood Program, including instructional, activity and play spaces, and supporting resources such as lavatories and dining areas, are adequate in construction, space provided per child, and maintenance to meet the needs of the children in the program.
- 7.f. Those sections of the Early Childhood Program that serve children under the age of three meet health and safety regulations/guidelines as required in your state.

Standard 8 (Residential Program and/or Homestay Program): The Residential Program and/or Homestay Program provide for an intentional curriculum, appropriate facilities, engaging activities, and adequate supervision to meet the needs of each student.

Suggested Indicators (Residential Program):

- 8.a. The Residential Program is consistent with the mission of the school.
- 8.b. Residential staff are qualified to meet the needs of students under their care and supervision.
- 8.c. The Residential Program is integrated into the total life of the school, especially with regard to the interaction with day students.
- 8.d. Evening, weekend, and vacation activities are actively planned, as part of the residential curriculum, to meet the needs of the students.
- 8.e. The school provides for the needs of international students, students with limited financial resources, and students who have difficulty adjusting to being away from home.
- 8.f. If technological services, such as computers, Internet access, email, and/or telephones, are included in residential areas, there is a process to ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with the school's overall technology plan and acceptable use policy.
- 8.g. Through a well-defined process involving students, parents, and staff, a regular review of the Residential Program is accomplished which is intended to lead to revisions and/or improvements.
- 8.h. There are clearly-stated, written, and understood expectations for residential students and staff.
- 8.i. Students are included in planning and developing policies, expectations, and programs.

Suggested Indicators (Homestay Program):

- 8.j. The Homestay Program is consistent with the mission of the school.
- 8.k. The school has a formal contract with homestay families if there is a direct placement or with an agency that provides homestay placements.
- 8.l. The school assures that homestay facilities are safe and clean, and provide sufficient living space.
- 8.m. There is a clearly defined process in place to screen host families, including a background check, and a process for matching student and family interests.
- 8.n. There is a procedure to include host families and students in defining and understanding the ethical and legal responsibilities of the school, host families, and students.
- 8.o. The school has clearly-stated, written, and understood expectations for the school, host families, and students regarding the student academic program and experiences both during the school week and on weekends and vacations, and these expectations and responsibilities are published and disseminated in a school handbook.
- 8.p. The school has a well-defined process, which includes students and host families, to regularly review the homestay program and the experience of the students for the purpose of improvement.
- 8.q. The school has procedures in place to integrate international and other students living in homestay situations into the school's social and academic fabric.

Standard 9 (Faculty): There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty to carry out the mission of the school and the school follows a comprehensive and defined program of professional development that supports continued enhancement of teachers' skills.

Suggested Indicators:

- 9.a. The school has a procedure for recruiting professional staff who are the best available for the tasks to be performed and for the mission of the school, and also has a procedure for screening and interviewing candidates and providing them with necessary background information about the school.
- 9.b. Academic personnel are qualified by education, training, or experience in the areas to which they are assigned.
- 9.c. Academic personnel are regularly trained in the areas of skills, content, and the context of a multicultural society.
- 9.d. The school has a shared understanding of teaching excellence.
- 9.e. The school has a defined program for the evaluation and supervision of teachers.
- 9.f. Personnel practices provide ethical treatment among all faculty, administration, and staff with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions.
- 9.g. The school demonstrates a commitment to staff development by providing opportunity for and expecting participation in professional growth and development.
- 9.h. The faculty are treated with respect and the school sets clear expectations for their professional behavior.
- 9.i. If the school offers online courses, faculty responsible for providing these courses are appropriately qualified, trained, supported, and evaluated.

Standard 10 (Administration): The administration provides leadership and maintains a structure to facilitate the effective functioning of the school, including the participation of faculty in decision-making.

Suggested Indicators:

- 10.a. The administration is effective in carrying out the program of the school and the policies established by the governing body or school board.
- 10.b. Administrative personnel and support staff are qualified by education, training or experience to serve in the areas to which they are assigned.
- 10.c. The administration assures review and evaluation of the educational program and provides that a current curriculum plan is in place.
- 10.d. The administration involves faculty in decision-making about the program of the school.
- 10.e. The school demonstrates a commitment to administrator development by providing opportunity for and expecting participation in professional growth and development.
- 10.f. The school has a defined program for the evaluation and supervision of administrators.

Standard 11 (Evaluation and Assessment): The school engages in forms of programmatic assessment consistent with fulfilling its mission and core values. This data is used to inform decision-making and planning.

Suggested Indicators:

- 11.a. The school conducts annual program review and revision based on assessment of student performance.
- 11.b. The school uses some form of longitudinal assessment of student performance (such as portfolio assessment).
- 11.c. The school conducts exit interviews of students and faculty and uses the data to inform admissions and program planning.
- 11.d. The school has procedures to follow-up on the experiences of alumni/ae and uses the data to inform admissions and program planning.
- 11.e. The school brings in consultants and/or visitors from other schools to participate in the periodic evaluation of programs.
- 11.f. The vitality/influence of the mission in the life of the school is assessed.
- 11.g. The school participates in state sponsored learning results activities, as appropriate.
- 11.h. The school carries out programs for supervision and evaluation of all personnel that are understood by all concerned.
- 11.i. Those responsible for leadership engage in periodic self-evaluation of their performance.
- 11.j. The school develops and publishes a policy and plan on diversity and difference, derived from its mission and core values, that it uses to evaluate the status of the school in this regard and to guide planning to achieve goals.
- 11.k. If applicable, the school's plans for developing, sustaining, and expanding online courses are integrated into the overall planning and evaluation procedures of the school.

Standard 12 (Health and Safety): The school is a safe place that supports the physical, emotional and cognitive health and development of all students, faculty and staff.

Suggested Indicators:

- 12.a. The school's culture and climate, policies and procedures, rooted in inclusivity and empathy, honor the dignity of every person in their community.
- 12.b. Students affirm they are supported in the development of relationships (student to student and student to faculty) based in trust and mutual respect.
- 12.c. The school has appropriate services and personnel to support the emotional, social and psychological needs of the students.
- 12.d. The school thoroughly and regularly educates and trains all personnel in the legal requirements of mandatory reporting, appropriate emotional and physical boundaries and healthy relationships.
- 12.e. The school hires personnel using thorough and consistent practices, including background checks and personal references.
- 12.f. The school's policy for written professional references respects both the integrity of author and subject and the necessity for honesty and candor.
- 12.g. The physical facilities and staffing for healthcare appropriately address the needs of the student body, whether residential or day.

- 12.h. Facilities and staff for food services are adequate and the quality of the food meets reasonable nutritional requirements.
- 12.i. The school's Crisis Response Plan is comprehensive, understood and practiced by faculty, staff, students and, where appropriate, parents.
- 12.j. The school continually audits and validates the systems, facilities and practices that insure the safety of the school community.
- 12.k. There is a person or committee with responsibility for reviewing safety provisions for on-campus and off-campus activities, including field trips, athletic events, wilderness expeditions, etc.
- 12.l. The school requires appropriate adult-student supervision during school hours and all school-sponsored student activities and programs.
- 12.m. The school has a reporting procedure in place to document and follow-up on any incidents regarding health and safety of students and staff.

Standard 13 (Communication): The school maintains effective systems of external and internal communication and record keeping that inform all constituents and facilitate participation where appropriate.

Suggested Indicators:

- 13.a. The school maintains complete and accurate records for both current and former students that are protected against loss by fire or theft and are available only to authorized persons.
- 13.b. The school publishes current school policies and procedures in handbooks or makes them readily available in other forms to the affected constituencies, and effectively implements the policies as published.
- 13.c. The school has a mechanism in place for input from staff into decision-making regarding personnel policies, budget preparation, and other areas, as appropriate.
- 13.d. Information regarding the financial responsibilities of the parent/guardian or student to the institution is clearly stated in writing and is made available prior to enrollment.
- 13.e. There is a procedure for determining equitable adjustments in tuition and other financial obligations existing between the parent/guardian and the institution.
- 13.f. Appropriate channels are available for parents to reflect their concerns and interests to school personnel.
- 13.g. Student progress is reported regularly to parents in a clear and comprehensive manner.
- 13.h. The school structures ways to work with parents/guardians proactively. The school is aware of the ways in which families from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic status are affected by school policies and programs.
- 13.i. The school maintains complete and accurate records for staff and faculty members that are available only to authorized persons and are protected against loss by fire, theft, or technological failure.
- 13.j. There is an internal communication system to distribute minutes of meetings, give notice of decisions, and inform the school community of events and other news.

Standard 14 (Infrastructure): There are adequate resources (personnel, finances, facilities, equipment, and materials) to provide for the overall institutional needs of the school.

Suggested Indicators:

- 14.a. The school has appropriate procedures for accounting and for auditing the accounts of the school.
- 14.b. The school has adequate financial resources for the needs of the school.
- 14.c. The school has adequate provision for insurance coverage.
- 14.d. The physical facilities of the school are appropriately maintained.
- 14.e. There is a recent facilities plan covering future needs, improvements, and additions.
- 14.f. The school has a clear picture of its long and short-term development needs and the plans, organization, and staffing to meet those needs.
- 14.g. The school has an institutional technology plan that provides for the coordination of academic and administrative functions, defines the technological services available, projects needs and directions, and describes the management system.

Standard 15 (The Accreditation Process): The school is fully committed to institutional improvement and to the process of accreditation. The school completed an inclusive Self-Study, conducted in a spirit of full disclosure and following Association guidelines; responds to Commission recommendations and the requirement to meet all Standards; and participates fully in the peer review process, hosting a Visiting Committee and sending personnel to serve on Visiting Committees to other institutions.

Suggested Indicators:

- 15.a. The school has completed a thorough Self-Study in accordance with NEASC policies, including Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion.
- 15.b. Administration, professional staff and those with governance responsibilities have actively participated in and are familiar with the Self-Study and its findings.
- 15.c. The school has in place a procedure for follow-up on plans and strategies found in its own Self-Study and on recommendations in the Visiting Committee Report and to integrate improvement plans resulting from the Self-Study into the school's Multi-Year Plan.
- 15.d. The school participates in the Association's peer based accreditation process and is represented on Visiting Committees to other schools.

(Last revised July 2017)

Assessment of Standards

Standards should be assessed through the lens of student experience. The fundamental test is whether or not students are supported. When a Standard is “Met,” student experience is reasonably whole, positive and creative. When it is “Unmet,” students are – or may be – adversely affected. While some Standards have more direct or immediate student effects, every Standard ultimately makes itself felt in the lives of a school’s students.

SM1: Standard Met: evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.

SM2: Standard Met: evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

SU1: Standard Unmet: evidences inadequate understanding, implementation and planning for remediation that may foreseeably compromise student experience.

SU2: Standard Unmet: lacks understanding, implementation and planning for remediation, thereby compromising student experience.

During the Self-Study, schools rate themselves on every Standard.

During its visit, the Visiting Committee also rates the school on every Standard. When the Committee’s ratings differ from the school’s rating, the Committee will explain its conclusions.

Assessment of Standard	
Met <i>(The students’ experience is supported.)</i>	Unmet <i>(The students’ experience is compromised.)</i>
SM1. Standard Met: evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.	SU1. Standard Unmet: evidences inadequate understanding, implementation and planning for remediation that may foreseeably compromise student experience.
SM2. Standard Met: evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.	SU2. Standard Unmet: lacks understanding, implementation and planning for remediation, thereby compromising student experience.

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