The Impact of Accreditation on the Quality of Education:
Results of the Regional Accreditation & Quality of Education Survey,
NEASC 2005

July 2006

New England Association of Schools & Colleges
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Acknowledgements

This acknowledgement thanks individuals who have kindly shared their guidance and expertise for this project and report. We are grateful to Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education staff, Maria Martiniello and Dr. John Collins, for their research assistance. Karina Ku and Laura Leon also provided research and editorial assistance. We also recognize with appreciation the survey respondents whose insights, opinions and shared experiences form the invaluable foundation of this study. Finally, we thank the more than 14,000 trained, volunteer peer evaluators who serve a constituency of almost 2,000 institutions.
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Executive Summary

Educational reforms of the last decade have received increased scrutiny regarding their effectiveness in raising student achievement. A number of research studies have examined the relationships between academic achievement and isolated factors such as class size, teacher experience, students per computer or hours of instruction per year. To date, however, considerably less attention has been given to, or research conducted on, institutional practices that affect teaching and learning. For example, there is little research on school accreditation, a process affecting a range of institutional practices, including those governing classroom instruction, capital resources, finances, staffing needs, student services, administration and professional development. The scarcity of research on accreditation may be explained in that accreditation is a process that affects many types of schools in a variety of ways. Correspondingly, the task of ‘measuring’ the impact of the accreditation process on the quality of education is complex and challenging. For example, how does one measure the effects of a process that impacts an array of schools in various ways? Assessing the impact of the accreditation process is less straightforward than comparing schools based on characteristics like student-teacher ratio, per student expenditure, percentage of certified teachers, graduation rate, students per computer, library holdings or test scores. Moreover, can a process even be an indicator of quality?

Research on best practices in education point to a host of school-level variables that benefit student learning. There has been comparatively less inquiry into how characteristics of an institution, apart from factors inside the classroom, affect the quality of teaching and learning. Although the accreditation process has, over decades, affected educational institutions serving every grade level (pre-kindergarten to postgraduate), few studies have explored the impact of accreditation on the quality of education leaving important questions unanswered. For example, do the types of professional development activities for teachers affect instruction? Do students benefit academically when they attend schools where faculty and administrators engage in shared decision-making? Does the work environment affect teachers’ morale and, in turn, the quality of instruction they provide? Do schools in which teachers collaborate extensively in lesson design provide a better education than schools where faculty teamwork is minimal? Do certain administrative policies and practices influence the quality of education?
To answer these and other questions, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the first and oldest accrediting agency, initiated a study through its Office of Research to examine the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at accredited institutions. In 2005, a survey instrument consisting of 31 close-ended and five open-ended questions was developed and sent to all member schools that had hosted a visiting team of peer evaluators during academic years 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

The primary objective of the NEASC study was to gather measurable insights about the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions, consisting of public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools; technical and career schools; higher education institutions; and international schools worldwide. To gain a deeper understanding about what constitutes a quality education, NEASC directly queried educators recently involved in the accreditation process. The study also intended to determine if school leaders perceive the impact of accreditation on the quality of education as a short- or long-range impact, or both, while examining differences across Commissions and institution types (e.g. comparing small and large institutions, leadership experience of respondents, per pupil expenditures of public schools or independent school tuition charges), to see what school-related factors, if any, may have affected school leaders’ attitudes toward accreditation.

Established in 1885, the New England Association of Schools & Colleges accredits educational institutions in the six states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont and currently in more than 65 nations. The Association is often cited for establishing high standards that influence educational planning and priorities at all levels of schooling. This can range from academic programming, student assessment, professional development, staffing and health services to financial planning, facility operations and institutional administration. Since the early 1970s, international schools have joined this process, long touted by educators as the impetus of systemic institutional improvement. NEASC is the first and oldest accrediting agency in the nation. Over the years it has not only grown in membership size to 1,900+ institutions, accrediting more than 95% of public secondary schools and over 90% of degree-granting higher education institutions in New England, it also serves a growing number of American/International schools worldwide since the 1970s. In this capacity, it has become increasingly influential in informing education policy in the region, nationally and, in some cases, internationally as it is consulted or referenced regularly for research-based best practices.
The results of the Regional Accreditation and Quality of Education Survey demonstrate that accreditation has had a profound and enduring impact on NEASC member institutions’ quality of education, including those that vary in size, resources, per student expenditure, enrollment, academic programming, grade-levels served and geographic setting (urban, suburban and rural). Findings are based on both quantitative and qualitative survey data.

Study results were divided into three parts corresponding to three distinct groups of respondents. School principals, heads or headmasters from public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools as well as technical and career schools formed Group 1, the largest of the three groups. The 226 respondents from this group, cited throughout the report as the “K-12 survey respondents,” included 102 public secondary school leaders, 28 public elementary and middle school leaders, 12 technical and career school leaders and 84 independent K-12 school leaders. The second group of respondents included 18 school leaders at accredited international schools worldwide. The third group consisted of 35 respondents, primarily college and university presidents of accredited institutions of higher education.

Altogether, 279 educators representing NEASC-accredited schools, colleges and universities completed the survey.¹

¹ Ideally, each group would have had the same number of respondents; however, given that the six NEASC Commissions vary in membership size, an equal number of respondents from every Commission was unlikely. In general, response rates across the individual Commissions were similar. Proportionately, overall findings profile the larger Commissions accordingly (CPSS and CIS). These larger Commissions represent institutions that are greater in number overall with the exception of public elementary and middle schools—that is, there are more public secondary schools and independent K-12 schools than there are technical and career schools.
**K-12 schools, Quantitative Results**

Findings from the K-12 survey indicate that respondents perceive accreditation as a process that impacts a host of school-level characteristics in ways identified by best practice research to positively affect student learning and achievement. The survey was sent to a cross-section of public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools, and technical and career schools (i.e. sampled CPSS, CPEMS, CTCI and CIS member schools.

**K-12 Schools, Quantitative Results**

Survey data are based on responses from school leaders representing sampled K-12 schools (N=226) who were asked to indicate their level of agreement to 31 statements. Key findings are as follows (with wording taken from the survey questions):

- The vast majority of respondents (92%) agree that the accreditation process ‘has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education.’

- A majority of respondents (78%) agree that accreditation ‘has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.’

- Over three-quarters of survey respondents (83%) believe that the Standards set by Commissions ‘will help improve teaching and learning’ at their schools.\(^2\)

- More than three-quarters of respondents (84%) agree that ‘accreditation affects school improvement in *both* the short- and the long-term.’\(^3\)

- Over two-thirds of respondents (71%) indicate that they would worry ‘the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.’

- More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) agree that participation in the accreditation process ‘has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.’

- Nearly three-quarters of school leaders (74%) believe ‘participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic

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\(^2\) The total number of responses to this question is 225 given one blank answer.

\(^3\) See note 2.
environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment for students.\(^4\)

Over half of the respondents (60\%) agree that ‘participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for staff.’\(^5\)

Almost three-quarters of respondents (74\%) believe that ‘participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and management’ at their schools.\(^6\)

Over two-thirds of respondents (68\%) indicate that the accreditation process ‘has led to improvements in institutional leadership.’\(^7\)

More than three-quarters of respondents (82\%) agree that participation in the accreditation process ‘has resulted in better staff communication.’

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73\%) agree that participation in the accreditation process ‘has led to more teamwork among staff.’

A majority of respondents (87\%) agree that their school ‘was fairly evaluated.’ Most respondents (88\%) also agree their school ‘was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.’

Over three-quarters of respondents (84\%) believe that ‘the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.’\(^8\)

More than three-quarters of respondents (77\%) agree that their Commissions ‘provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.’

These findings clearly indicate that the vast majority of K-12 survey respondents perceive accreditation as a process that impacts a host of school-level characteristics in ways identified by best practice research to positively affect student learning. Moreover, respondents who expressed disagreement or uncertainty about some of the above statements in the quantitative section may have only done so because visiting teams found that their schools already exhibited ample effective practices and resources. Based on survey findings, accreditation appears to have a more significant

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\(^4\) The total number of responses to this question is 224 given two blank answers.
\(^5\) See note 2.
\(^6\) The total number of responses to this question is 223 given three blank answers.
\(^7\) See note 2.
\(^8\) See note 2.
impact on schools that have a number of areas needing improvement or not meeting accreditation standards (as deemed by a visiting team) and less of an impact on schools in which most accreditation Standards are satisfactorily addressed.

In addition, though the majority of survey respondents indicate that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short- and long-term, nearly one-fifth of the respondents (19%) indicate they are “not certain.” This, however, was expected because a number of respondents represent schools new to the accreditation process.

9 Specifically, many public elementary and middle schools are new to accreditation since 1984 when the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS) was founded; in fact, many CPEMS schools are only beginning their ten-year comprehensive cycle in 2005 or thereafter. Thus they would be unable to gauge the long-term impact of accreditation. Most of these schools may have begun to implement visiting team recommendations only in the last 1-2 years subsequent to their initial evaluation visit.
Table 1: School factors impacted by accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent Reporting</th>
<th>Percent Reporting by Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Improved instruction</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>CPSS 52%</td>
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<td>CPEMS 32%</td>
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**K-12 Schools, Qualitative Results**

The qualitative section of the survey provided an opportunity for respondents to describe how the accreditation process has impacted the quality of education at their school. Respondents’ written answers offer a deeper and broader understanding of how accreditation affects schools in different settings. Overall, findings reveal that despite differences across the range of institutions in terms of school size, public versus private control, location, previous experience with accreditation and per pupil spending, most school leaders agree that accreditation drives positive change in schools.

When asked, “How has accreditation impacted the quality of education at your school?” New England (NE) K-12 school leaders overwhelmingly indicated that accreditation positively affected the quality of education at their schools. Specifically, these respondents reported that accreditation (ranked in order from most to least frequently cited):

1. **Improved instruction**—
   Surveyed K-12 school leaders most frequently answered that accreditation improved instruction at their school. Many wrote that the Standards for Accreditation, self-study and visiting team recommendations led to positive changes in areas like curriculum and assessment. They also reported that accreditation prompted improvements to classroom teaching practices and resulted in teachers having higher expectations for students (a practice emphasized by visiting team recommendations and the Standards for Accreditation). Additionally, respondents stated that teachers engaged in more student-centered instruction and smaller learning communities were formed. Some noted that their schools adopted a more rigorous academic program while others stated that they used student data to guide teaching and assessment (another practice stressed in the Standards). A number of respondents—primarily those from public secondary schools—reported that accreditation led their school to move from a tracking to a heterogeneous grouping system. Most importantly, several of the reported outcomes resulting from accreditation, such as high academic expectations for all students, heterogeneous grouping over tracking and student-centered instruction over teacher-centered instruction, are supported by best practice research to raise academic achievement.
2. **Enabled schools to identify strengths and weaknesses**—
Respondents reported that the self-study and accreditation standards were valuable institutional self-assessment tools that helped staff identify strengths and weaknesses collaboratively. Some claimed the accreditation process was comprehensive and “provided self-knowledge,” enabling schools to effectively identify and focus on specific areas requiring improvement. Others noted that the process helped to nurture consensus in decision-making. Several respondents noted that the self-study process, team evaluation visit and visiting team’s recommendations elicited immediate actions to address identified weaknesses that schools might otherwise have overlooked or delayed addressing.

3. **Improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning**—
At many schools, the accreditation process reportedly improved organizational effectiveness and led to better long-term planning. According to some, this occurred because the Standards emphasized a commitment to the school’s mission as well as a long-term mindset concerning school goals. In turn, some suggested this prompted more effective planning and decision-making. In addition, many respondents noted that visiting teams’ recommendations provided a useful “blueprint” or “framework” for their schools’ strategic planning efforts.

4. **Led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality**—
Respondents reported that the accreditation process prompted staff teamwork and collegiality. They wrote that the process reduced feelings of isolation and fragmentation by stimulating inter-grade and inter-department communication. Some also noted that accreditation led to the formation of “staff work teams” or “Professional Learning Communities.” Other respondents commented that it spawned greater emphasis on collective problem-solving.

5. **Improved school resources**—
A number of respondents noted that the accreditation process helped identify weaknesses in school resources. Other school leaders claimed visiting teams’ recommendations were used to justify their schools’ requests to the school board or town council for funding towards resources that a team deemed inadequate. They noted that their schools’ requests were taken more seriously because recommendations came from an impartial, knowledgeable and independent group.
6. **Improved professional development**—
Some respondents reported that participation in accreditation improved professional development. While some respondents noted that the process appropriately placed greater emphasis on professional development at their school, others indicated that the process helped identify related problems such as lack of time for teachers to take advantage of professional development opportunities.

7. **Made school accountable**—
Respondents indicated that the accreditation process provided school accountability through well-devised standards, systematic assessment, focus on ongoing improvement and peer evaluation.

8. **Exposed school to new learning trends and innovations**—
Some respondents commented that the accreditation process exposed their staff to new learning trends, practices and innovations. This occurred because knowledge was shared by visiting team members who not only represented peer institutions but had commonly visited other schools in past accreditation visits. Thus, accreditation was described as a process linking schools and spreading creative new practices by facilitating inter-district information exchange through peer evaluators.

9. **Increased community support for school initiatives**—
Respondents reported that the accreditation process boosted community confidence in their school and provided credibility for school initiatives. Some wrote that community support for school initiatives rose because decisions were reinforced by recommendations given by the visiting team’s composition of independent and informed peer evaluators.

10. **Increased parental and community involvement**—
Some respondents reported that the accreditation process led to greater parental and community involvement with the school. They noted that parental involvement was especially high during the self-study process since the school was encouraged to include all school constituencies in the (re)accreditation process.

11. **Increased staff morale**—
A few respondents indicated that the accreditation process fostered staff unity, collegiality and rapport, thereby giving all school staff a feeling of ownership in the school’s successes. Some claimed that the process was “affirming” and “positive” and had the effect of instilling a feeling of empowerment among staff.
12. Led to better staffing decisions—
At some schools, the accreditation process led to better staffing decisions. For example, a few respondents commented that the process helped clarify leadership roles while others noted that it created an awareness of staffing needs and “pointed out weaknesses—not enough counselor’s time or nurse’s time—helping to address that need” as one respondent wrote.

13. Resulted in more continuity and consistency—
A few respondents reported that the team visit (which follows the self-study) set in motion specific follow-up plans for the immediate and long-term future of their schools. Others commented that the process was systematic and provided an ongoing focus.

14. Provided exposure to peer evaluators—
Some respondents reported that the accreditation process provided an opportunity to interact with and exchange ideas and information with distinguished and knowledgeable colleagues in the field.

Overall, the qualitative results revealed that, despite differences among the schools in terms of grade ranges served, public versus private control, enrollment size, per student expenditure and location, school leaders often had shared views about how accreditation affects the quality of education. Furthermore, school leaders’ comments corroborate the notion that a range of factors are involved in bolstering school effectiveness rather than a few isolated variables alone. Most importantly, the variety of factors influencing the quality of education transcends what occurs solely inside a classroom. School leaders’ responses indicate, for instance, that professional development, strategic long-term planning and the degree of teamwork among staff are important factors impacting the quality of education provided at their schools.

School Resources

The K-12 survey asked school leaders to describe the impact of accreditation on school resources. Based on survey findings, three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicated that the accreditation process was important for improving the quality of their resources, including library, multimedia and technology resources (Table 2, Page 13). Findings were similar across the Commissions—74% of public secondary school leaders, 69% of public elementary and middle school leaders, 89% of technical and career school leaders and 77% of independent K-12 school leaders reported
that accreditation has been important in terms of improving the quality of resources at their schools. Some respondents commented that that accreditation did not improve the quality of their resources per se because the school had already made resources a top priority. Schools with abundant and modern resources for students and teachers are less likely to receive evaluators’ recommendations to improve these areas. In fact, it was expected that some respondents would report accreditation had minimal or no impact on the quality of resources because their schools already had ample, high-quality resources.

Past research indicates that the quality of a school’s resources correlates with academic achievement by students. While there are disagreements about which resources have the greatest impact on student learning, it is well-known that today’s K-12 students use more technology and are expected, by high school graduation, to be more proficient in such areas than ever before.

An increasing amount of research indicates that the quality of technology and library resources affect learning outcomes for K-12 students. The importance of developing information technology competencies is vital, even for young learners at the elementary school level, where students begin building basic technology skills.

While the financial resources for purchasing and upgrading technology, library and other resources have a bearing on the quantity and quality of a school’s resources, financial resources are not the lone factor affecting the quality of resources. How resources are made accessible to teachers and students and the amount and kinds of professional development training for staff in technology also impact the effectiveness of these resources. Unfortunately, inequitable resources are frequently linked to socioeconomic disparities across school districts. Wealthier communities are often better able to support schools in acquiring new resources than are poorer communities. Inequities in resources across school districts have a pervasive effect on the ‘digital divide’ among young learners. However, schools can also find ways to innovatively counteract imbalances to maximize the effectiveness of available resources.

Those respondents who reported that accreditation improved their school’s resources claimed the process did so by:

1. **Justifying needs to the school community**
   Respondents reported that visiting teams’ recommendations validated their schools’ requests for needed resources because such
recommendations came from an objective, credible and independent group of educators. For instance, some noted that visiting team recommendations provided schools with additional leverage in their requests for funding to school boards and town councils. The recommendations also informed the school community of resources needed by the district’s schools together with common standards and practices of other school districts.

2. Keeping schools updated and equal with regard to the quality of their resources

Respondents indicated that accreditation promoted parity among NEASC members since accreditation Standards regarding resources (e.g. technology and library supplies) are uniformly applied to peer institutions.

Table 2: Percentage of K-12 respondents reporting accreditation was important for improving school resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMISSION</th>
<th>IMPORTANT</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>NOT IMPORTANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS¹</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS²</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS³</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENT K-12 SCHOOLS⁴</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL⁵</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Enabling schools to identify needs—

Respondents claimed that they used NEASC Standards and visiting team recommendations to determine if resources were adequate (i.e. meeting accreditation Standards). Some claimed that during the self-study, issues like facility improvements and access to resources were thoroughly and methodically assessed.

4. Using existing resources more effectively—

Some respondents reported that the accreditation process led their school to utilize resources in a more efficient and creative manner. A few respondents claimed that the process led staff to become more aware of the extent of resources available to them while others commented that their school staff became more cognizant of ways that resources could be put to better use.
5. **Helping schools plan and budget for resources for the short and long-term**—

At some schools, accreditation helped administrators prioritize where funds for specific resources were needed most while deliberating short- and long-term objectives; for instance, by considering long-term needs, schools could plan and budget more effectively so that resources like technology and information systems could be maintained and upgraded.

**International schools (K-12)**

The second group surveyed consisted of international school leaders, (i.e. school leaders from CAISA member schools). These respondents received surveys identical to those sent to the New England (NE) K-12 school leaders. However, international school survey results were extracted and profiled separately given the distinguishing features of these schools. For instance, international schools typically serve students of more than two dozen nationalities. Students may or may not be preparing for college/university in western Europe or North America meaning that a number of postsecondary entrance exams for an array of receiving countries must be offered at an international school. These ordinarily include exams administered by the College Board such as the SATs, the international baccalaureate program and English A-levels (United Kingdom). Many international schools are located in countries where the national language is not English so that the school itself may be the only environment in which English predominates. There are high rates of student and teacher turnover requiring administrators to cope with continually changing student demographics, unpredictable enrollments and lack of time to develop close and long-term relationships with many students, staff and families. In addition, results for international schools were separated in order to gauge the similarities and differences in the ways that accreditation impacts international schools compared to K-12 schools in New England.

The international school survey was treated as a pilot study because of the smaller pool of schools involved in an accreditation visit over the past few years and the fewer members found in CAISA, NEASC’s newest Commission. In total there were 18 international school respondents. Despite the small sample size, the results in hand indicate that the accreditation process affects school improvement at accredited
international schools in ways similar to local schools. Additionally, the quantitative results indicate that international schools derive greater benefits through participation in accreditation when compared with K-12 schools in New England.

**International Schools (K-12), Quantitative Results**

The quantitative results of the international school survey, for the most part, largely parallel those from the K-12 survey in that most respondents believe the accreditation process has improved the quality of education at their schools. Moreover, international school leaders have more positive views than NE K-12 school leaders, although the small sample prevents us from making any broad generalizations. Further studies may corroborate or elaborate on findings from the NEASC pilot study explaining why international schools seem to benefit more from participation in accreditation than other schools. Key findings are as follows:

- 94% of international school leaders (17 of 18) compared to 92% of other (NE-based) K-12 survey respondents, agree that the accreditation process ‘has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education.’
- 83% of international school leaders (15 of 18) compared to 78% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that participation in the accreditation process ‘has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.’
- 89% of international school leaders (16 of 18) compared to 83% of other K-12 survey respondents believe that ‘the standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning.’
- 94% of international school leaders (17 of 18) compared to 84% of other K-12 survey respondents report that ‘accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term.’
- 94% of international school leaders (17 of 18) compared to 71% of other K-12 survey respondents, indicate that they ‘would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end.’
- 85% of international school leaders (15 of 18) compared to 82% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that ‘accreditation has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.’
94% of international school leaders (17 of 18) compared to 82% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that accreditation ‘has resulted in better staff communication.’

78% of international school leaders (14 of 18) compared to 73% of other K-12 survey respondents, believe accreditation ‘has led to more teamwork among staff.’

78% of international school leaders (14 of 18) compared to 77% of other K-12 survey respondents agree that ‘participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment for students.’

83% of international school leaders (15 of 18) compared to 74% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that participation in the accreditation process ‘has improved organization and management’ at their school.

89% of international school leaders (16 of 19) compared to 68% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that accreditation ‘has led to improvements in institutional leadership.’

100% of international school leaders (all 18) compared to 88% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that their school was fairly evaluated.

83% of international school leaders (15 of 18) compared to 88% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that their school ‘was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.’

94% of international school leaders (17 of 18) compared to 77% of other K-12 survey respondents, believe that ‘the recommendations made by the visiting team were valid and thorough.’

83% of international school leaders (15 of 18) compared to 77% of other K-12 survey respondents, agree that their Commission ‘provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.’

While the quantitative responses of the international school leaders are limited to 18 schools, the findings suggest that international schools derive greater benefits from participation in accreditation. This is because a higher proportion of international school leaders compared to NE K-12 school leaders held favorable opinions about the impact of accreditation at their schools.
International schools (K-12), Qualitative Results

Responses of international school leaders were unexpectedly similar to responses of the NE-based K-12 survey respondents. This was an unanticipated result given international schools’ unique settings and challenges relative to domestic schools. While the results of the responses are not easily generalized given that only 18 schools are represented, the findings themselves indicate that there are features of the accreditation process that positively affect the quality of education, transcending national boundaries. For instance, although international schools confront a unique set of issues and challenges, international school leaders’ reactions to accreditation are not especially distinct from the reactions of NE-based school leaders.

Like NE K-12 school leaders, international school leaders placed high value on accreditation for its impact on improving instruction, resources, teamwork and management. Responding to the question, “How has accreditation impacted the quality of education at your institution?” international school leaders answered in unexpectedly similar ways as their peers in New England. Listed from most frequently to least frequently cited, they reported that accreditation:

1. enabled schools to identify strengths and weaknesses;
2. improved instruction;
3. led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality;
4. improved schools’ organizational effectiveness and long-term planning;
5. improved school resources;
6. improved professional development;
7. provided an effective system for ensuring school accountability;
8. increased community support for school initiatives;
9. led to better staffing decisions and
10. raised staff morale
As with NE-based K-12 school leaders, international school leaders frequently reported that the self-study, Standards for Accreditation and visiting team recommendations enabled school staff to identify strengths and weaknesses. In general, they noted that the accreditation process provides direction, focus and a mindset conducive to forwarding goals and mobilizing the entire school to move in a positive direction. Overall, the top responses from international school leaders mirrored the top responses from other K-12 survey respondents based in NE suggesting that the accreditation process impacts school improvement in surprisingly similar ways regardless of geographical location.

**School Resources**

When asked how important the accreditation process is in terms of improving the quality of school resources like technology, library and multimedia resources, a majority of international school leaders (71%) indicated that the accreditation process was important in terms of
improving the quality of school resources while 12% did not believe the process was important. Some respondents (18%) indicated that the process was neither important nor unimportant for improving the quality of resources. International school leaders’ responses were very similar to the responses of the NE K-12 school leaders. For instance, as with the NE K-12 school leaders, international school leaders reported that accreditation impacted school resources by: identifying weaknesses and bringing about an awareness of needs previously not considered, helping schools in terms of budgeting and long-term planning for resources, resulting in a more efficient use of existing resources, justifying needs to the school board and prompting a heightened emphasis on technology and library needs.

The qualitative results of the international schools’ survey revealed that international school leaders together with peers in New England, overall, share beliefs about what stimulates positive change at their schools and how accreditation has impacted these factors. At the very least, this pilot study has provided an approach and groundwork for further inquiry on the impact of accreditation on international schools.

Higher Education Institutions

A survey similar to the K-12 survey was sent to heads of accredited higher education institutions. As with the K-12 survey, the higher education survey was sent only to institutions that hosted visiting teams after 2002. A total of 75 institutions hosted visiting teams between 2002 and 2005 of which 35 institutions’ leaders responded. The sample consisted primarily of college and university presidents representing a mix of public and independent institutions—16 public and 14 independent institutions. (Five respondents did not specify whether their institution was public or independent.) The higher education survey questions differed from the K-12 one in terms of questions regarding instruction and governance given that these areas differ considerably from the K-12 sector; accordingly, survey questions were adjusted to be more appropriate for higher education. While it may be difficult to generalize survey findings to all accredited higher education institutions given that responses were based on feedback from 35 respondents, the results were still useful and informative.

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1 Note: higher education institutions that had team evaluation visits in 2002 would have typically begun self-studies as far back as 2000 since a self-study ordinarily takes place for the 12 to 18 months preceding the team evaluation.
New England has the highest concentration of higher education institutions and research centers of any region in the nation. The region’s colleges and universities hold an enviable worldwide reputation for offering high quality education. Accreditation served New England’s higher education sector has since 1927 when the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) was founded. Accreditation is often credited with encouraging institutional improvement, prompting innovation and fostering adaptation to a continuously changing society and economy. At the same time, the process has been honored for appreciating diversity in the distinct objectives of member institutions. Thus, the effectiveness of the accreditation process, in a sense, relies on applying broadly encompassing standards to a very wide array of institutions.

**Higher Education Institutions, Quantitative Results**

The quantitative results of the higher education survey are as follows (with wording taken from the survey questions):

- 97% of respondents (34 of 35) agree that accreditation ‘fulfilled the function of promoting quality’ at their institution.

- 100% of respondents (35 of 35) believe that accreditation ‘fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of education’ at their institution.

- 97% of respondents (34 of 35) agree that ‘participation in accreditation was useful to faculty and staff’ at their institution.

- 67% of the respondents (22 of 33) agree that participation in accreditation helped their governing board ‘understand their institution’s mission and academic programs.’11

- 97% of respondents (34 of 35) agree that the accreditation process ‘helped clarify important strengths and concerns of the institution.’

- 80% of respondents (29 of 35) believe that the accreditation process helped them ‘focus more productively on planning.’

- 85% of respondents (28 of 33) agree that accreditation motivates their institution ‘to focus more on assessment of student learning.’12

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11 The total number of responses to this question is 34 given one blank answer.
12 See note 11.
85% of respondents (32 of 34) indicate that ‘the level of the quality of education in New England would be changed if member institutions as a whole never participated in accreditation.’

82% of respondents (28 of 35) agree that ‘the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.’

100% (34 of 34) of the respondents believe their institution was fairly evaluated.

97% of respondents (33 of 34) agree that the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.

91% of respondents (32 of 35) believe ‘the standards set by the Commission are realistic.’

76% of respondents (26 of 34) agreed that the Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.

Higher Education Institutions, Qualitative Results

Asked what the greatest strengths of the accreditation process are, higher education survey respondents reported the following (in order from most to least frequently cited):

1. **Peer-review**—
   Most frequently cited as the greatest strength of accreditation was peer-review as reported by 52% of higher education respondents. Some claimed their institutions benefited from peer-review because of the practical and objective feedback received from peer evaluators who also were “equal colleagues” in the field. They also noted that the peer-review process gave them an opportunity to exchange information and interact with colleagues.

2. **Self-study**—
   A number of respondents claimed that through the self-study process, they gained an awareness of their institution’s strengths and weaknesses.

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13 See note 11.
14 See note 11.
15 See note 11.
The self-study process allowed faculty and staff to learn about other departments and areas of the institution.

3. **More effective planning**—
   Over one-third (40%) of higher education respondents claimed that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it prompted more effective planning and agenda-setting. Some noted that they used the process as a tool for strategic planning. Others wrote that the process encouraged the administration and faculty to more proactively deliver on identified objectives and priorities. Some commented that the process helped to set achievable goals.

4. **Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community**—
   Some respondents wrote that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it promoted collaboration and unified the campus community. For instance, respondents noted that the process encouraged dialogue between departments and groups who otherwise might not interact.

5. **Enabling effective assessment of strengths and weaknesses**—
   Some higher education survey respondents reported that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it effectively enabled their institution to identify strengths and weaknesses. The process also prompted reflection about priorities, goals and future needs. Respondents commented that the self-study and subsequent team evaluation visit identified a range of areas of improvement from academics, staff and faculty needs to student services, governance, health services, budgeting, fundraising and safety.

6. **The Standards for Accreditation**—
   A few respondents believed that the CIHE Standards were the greatest strength of the accreditation process. Some reported that they used the CIHE Standards for Accreditation to assess their institution and pinpoint areas of need. They also noted that the Standards served as a useful benchmarking tool or framework for effective institutional self-assessment. The Standards were also valued because they were comprehensive, realistic and uniform yet still adaptable to each institution.

7. **Accountability (public and quality assurance)**—
   Some higher education respondents wrote that the greatest strength of accreditation was that it provided institutional accountability in the form of public and quality assurance. In other words, respondents indicated
that the twin processes of peer-review and self-study promoted institutional accountability.

8. **Thoroughness**—
A few respondents indicated that the greatest strength of accreditation was the thoroughness of the process. They explained that the process is both intensive and extensive as every aspect of an institution is examined, including courses, teaching staff, academic programs, assessment, student services, health services, admissions, facilities, budget, governance and administration.

**Final Observations**

Survey results offer important insights about the ways that accredited K-12 schools and higher education institutions benefit from accreditation and use the process to guide their future objectives. At the same time, these results provide insights for future studies on regional accreditation in the education field which, thus far, is limited, thereby marginalizing school leaders’ points-of-view.

NEASC’s study, the first to examine the impact of NEASC accreditation on a broad array of member institutions that serve learners of every grade level, demonstrates that the process impacts various schools in surprisingly similar ways, most notably by prompting improvements to instruction, resources and institutional planning. Accreditation is not the only factor impacting school effectiveness, but across New England and among accredited international schools, it is evident that schools which recently had self-study and evaluation visits value this process for its impact on instruction, institutional effectiveness and resources.

International school results parallel those of other accredited schools in New England, suggesting that accreditation stimulates improvement in schools in comparable ways regardless of national setting or other contextual differences that distinguish international schools. Survey findings from international schools appear to coincide with the overarching trends observed among all K-12 schools.

Furthermore, respondents from K-12 schools in New England, international schools worldwide and higher education institutions, frequently suggest that the accreditation process impacts teaching and learning both in direct and indirect ways. Directly, the process impacts
schools’ physical resources like library and technology access and supplies. It also directly affects classroom teaching, by raising academic expectations for students and influencing curriculum and academic programs. Indirectly, it impacts teaching and learning by focusing schools on professional development and teamwork. The process is also reported to impact long-term planning and budgeting.

Although regional accreditation has been a longstanding practice in New England, its impact on institutions as a cohort has been unexplored. The perceived complexities of assessing a range of institutions and types may have been a cautionary factor. In broad strokes, however, this survey provides some insight into an activity that supports schools no matter how they may appear as complex organizations, often departmentalized or heavily fragmented. The accreditation process appears to generate cohesion, long-term direction and stability. The survey documents the process’ profound impact on decision-making and strategic planning and is often described as a “blueprint” or “framework” for future planning.

At the higher education level, survey results indicate that institutions derive value from the complementary processes of peer-review and self-study. Self-regulation and peer-review are described by respondents as integral processes for ensuring educational improvement in the higher education sector.

The accreditation process, previously under-studied, is shown to be a key element in strengthening education at all levels. Efforts by the evaluating agency to ‘evaluate’ itself, should continue, however challenging or complex the task. We anticipate that such efforts will contribute to yet another indicator of quality for those interested in developing, identifying and disseminating best practices.

Finally, the Association wishes to thank the more than 14,000 trained (and volunteer) peer evaluators who serve a constituency of almost 2,000 member institutions. The stature and integrity of the process of accreditation, as founded in New England, is recognized worldwide and remains a credit to these educators and our member institutions.
Today, policymakers, educators, public officials and ordinary citizens frequently diverge in their opinions about what quality education is and the best way to provide it. Important questions arise when investigating which factors impact the quality of education—for example, who determines what quality education is? Do all communities share beliefs about what is required to provide a quality education? Do all students learn in the same way such that ‘quality’ inputs can be uniformly applied in every classroom and in all institutional settings? How fixed in time are notions of a quality education and when do expectations change as the social and economic world around us perpetually transforms?

While there is no universal definition of “quality” in education, many educators agree that there are certain concrete instructional and material inputs necessary to ensure a quality education, such as a safe and comfortable classroom, up to date curriculum and textbooks and adequate reading and writing supplies for all students. Others insist that the very term ‘quality education’ is fundamentally subjective and that whatever constitutes a quality educational experience varies according to each community’s values, priorities and demographics. How to best deliver quality education with available resources, however, remains controversial. Another area of contention relates to schooling objectives. Although some believe that the foremost priority of K-12 education is to prepare students for postsecondary studies and ultimately a career, others insist that instilling civic values and developing the curiosity and critical thinking skills of young learners are just as important as teaching core academic subject areas.

Findings in this report reflect results from the Regional Accreditation and Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005, which was administered in the spring of 2005 by NEASC’s Office of Research. The primary aim of the study was to gather measurable insights about the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what constitutes ‘quality education,’ NEASC surveyed school leaders at a wide array of accredited institutions. The study also intended to determine if school leaders perceived the impact of accreditation on the quality of education as one which was of short-range, long-range impact or both, while examining differences across Commissions and institution types (for instance comparing small and large institutions, leadership experience of respondents, per pupil expenditures of public schools and independent K-12 school tuition charges), to see what school-related factors, if any, affect school leaders’ attitudes about accreditation.
The school leaders surveyed represent a cross-section of educational institutions in New England. Regional accreditation is undertaken by NEASC through six commissions which together accredit public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools, technical and career schools, degree-granting higher educational institutions and international schools worldwide. The institutions represented in the sample range widely in terms of student enrollment, financial resources, staff-student ratio, curricular programming, and extracurricular offerings. They also vary considerably with regard to the student and community demographics they serve.

A primary reason for limiting the respondent pool to members that hosted visiting teams after 2002 was to obtain insights about accreditation from school administrators who had recent experiences with visiting teams. In this way, survey data and written responses reflect fresh reactions to current standards. Furthermore, by limiting the respondent pool to institutions recently visited, there was a greater likelihood that respondents were, in fact, still working at their institution and in their current position at the time of the actual visit. Such respondents would be more likely to recall the recommendations made by visiting teams along with subsequent actions carried out in response to the visiting team’s report.

Given that NEASC accreditation Standards are used by educational institutions throughout the six-state region, span both public and independent institutions and serve learners of all ages and grades (pre-kindergarten through postgraduate), the Association initiated a study to understand the ways in which the accreditation process has impacted the quality of education at member institutions as perceived by the leaders of these institutions. The Association also intended to find out if accreditation has impacted the different types of institutions in its membership in similar ways. Were school resources, financial and otherwise, a factor in how school leaders felt about the impact of accreditation on the quality of education? Were there differences in attitudes from state to state? Were large institutions impacted more than small ones, or vice versa? Were international schools impacted in different ways than were K-12 schools in New England? By reviewing insights from a diverse group of 279 educational leaders, NEASC hoped to answer these and other questions. While there are recognized limitations in generalizing results to all member

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16 Every NEASC Commission periodically updates and revises their Standards for Accreditation. These are updated every few years in order to apply standards that reflect the latest research on best practices in schools. Each Commission’s Standards can be viewed by visiting the NEASC web at www.NEASC.org and clicking on the appropriate links.
institutions given that the school leaders in this survey only hosted visiting teams within the last three years, NEASC has nonetheless embarked on an effort that should inform the debate on best practices with evidence drawn from an empirical study. It is hoped that the results will inform the Association of its own strengths and practices most valued by member institutions as well as stimulate additional inquiry on the factors that affect the quality of education.

A total of 581 school leaders at NEASC member institutions were mailed surveys of which 279 responded yielding a response rate of 48%. This response rate was rendered acceptable for meeting needs of the study, though a recognized limitation was that conclusions could not be generalized to institutions visited prior to 2002. Worth noting is that schools that had a visit in 2002 would have, in fact, initiated the self-study process several months earlier as a self-study ordinarily takes 12 to 18 months. The team evaluation visit is thus a culmination of the self-study portion of the accreditation cycle. Therefore, results from schools that hosted teams in 2002, for instance, are intended to reflect opinions about the visit as well as the self-study which typically would have begun in academic-year 2000-2001.

Schools in the U.S. often lack access to, or are unfamiliar with, best practices or innovations found in the latest research and baseline standards at other schools. Members of the general public often assume that the government ensures standards-based education and school accountability when, in truth, government officials rarely enter schools, much less schools that vary across the spectrum of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. There are no regulations requiring school districts to exchange information, maintain periodic communication or interact in any way whatsoever. Participation in accreditation is a means by which schools and colleges can connect with, learn about and be part of an educational community with other schools and colleges in the region. This occurs primarily because those volunteers performing school evaluations are themselves educators from various peer institutions who spend days inside a school, meeting students, faculty, parents and administrators as they undergo the evaluation.

The U.S. has one of the most decentralized education systems in the industrialized world. The American system is also one of the world’s most expansive given its geographic landscape and population. That said, K-12 schools have considerable autonomy and may be unaware of the practices or resources used by other schools. Furthermore, given such autonomy, not all schools in the country are equally familiar with best practices found in the latest research.
Research aimed at discovering the most effective teaching techniques and institutional practices has demonstrated the ways in which these methods can be employed to improve educational outcomes for students of different backgrounds and with different learning styles. Effective practice research also informs educators of the key resources needed for students to achieve at their highest potential. Moreover, whereas many professional development opportunities are available for educators in some districts, in others, budget constraints limit such opportunities for teachers, who, if they were to engage in more professional development activities, would have more exposure to the latest research on effective practices; hence this might inspire and empower them to apply these methods in their classrooms for the benefit of all students.

Although the individual Commissions have solicited feedback from member institutions or conducted studies solely for their Commission, this study is the first to investigate the impact of the accreditation process on member institutions’ quality of education as a whole. As these findings reveal, despite differences in institutional characteristics, school leaders across the range of institutions share many opinions about how the accreditation process drives positive change. The overall findings are both optimistic and instructive as respondents identified and described various aspects of the accreditation process they believe contribute the most to the quality of education in the context of their own educational environment.
Methodology

The K-12 survey consisted of 31 close-ended questions divided into two parts and five open-ended questions at the end. (Refer to survey questions in Appendix A.1). Respondents were also asked questions about their demographic and professional background (e.g., gender and the number of years in office) in order to make comparisons and observe trends across institution types.

Of the six NEASC Commissions, four Commissions represent K-12 schools in New England: the Commission on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Career and technical Institutions (CTCI), and the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS). Respondents from member institutions at each of these four commissions received identical surveys while two other NEASC commissions—the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) and the Commission on American International Schools Abroad (CAISA)—were sent slightly modified surveys which asked questions appropriate to these types of institutions. (Refer to Appendix A.1 to A.3 to see the three surveys). The survey questions were developed in consultation with researchers not affiliated with NEASC who were relied on to objectively examine the soundness and validity of the questions. Confidentiality of responses was ensured. Each survey was coded so that characteristics about a given respondent’s institution could be traced in order to make comparisons and monitor trends. Commission directors and staff did not have access to any confidential materials.

Shortly after a pre-test was conducted in May, the survey was mailed to school leaders at 581 member institutions that hosted a visiting team between 2002 and 2005. As of 2005, NEASC’s membership of almost 2,000 institutions, included the majority of public and private secondary schools, technical and career schools, higher education institutions, a growing number of public and private elementary and middle schools, and over 130 international schools worldwide. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample size and response rate across the six commissions. The

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17 A standard K-12 survey was sent to school leaders representing K-12 institutions in New England (sampled CPEMS, CPSS, CTCI and CIS member schools). A nearly identical survey was sent to CAISA respondents but wording was modified in a few questions to more appropriately address leaders of international schools. The CIHE survey was shorter than the K-12 surveys and asked slightly different questions that were more appropriate for postsecondary institutions.

18 Surveys were coded to identify characteristics about a respondent’s institution such as state location, tuition or per pupil expenditure and years of involvement with accreditation. Once this information was entered into a database, identification of schools was no longer possible.
difference in the size of each Commission’s membership can be attributed largely to the formation of the separate commissions (with higher education and independent schools being the oldest in establishment).

As Table 4 shows, Commissions founded prior to 1960 including CPSS, CIHE, and CIS (all founded in 1927), have higher rates of membership while the relatively newer Commissions (CPEMS, founded in 1984 and CAISA, given Commission status in 2004 following formation as a Committee in 1978), have lower rates of membership. One limitation of the study was the variation in membership size across the Commissions; accordingly, the number of responses varies by Commission. Thus, overall results represent proportionately more opinions from respondents representing CPSS and CIS member schools and a lower number from CTCI, CIHE and CAISA schools. Nonetheless, overall the response rate was sufficient to carry out a meaningful analysis.

Table 4: Commissions’ founding years, institutions visited 2002 to 2005, and response rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>2005 Membership</th>
<th>Number of institutions visited from 2002 to 2005</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS)</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Career and technical Institutions (CTCI)</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Independent Schools (CIS)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on American International Schools Abroad (CAISA)</td>
<td>2004(^{20})</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,860</strong></td>
<td><strong>581</strong></td>
<td><strong>279</strong></td>
<td><strong>48%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the pool of 581 school administrators, surveys were returned by 279, giving an overall response rate of 48%. As mentioned previously, when

\(^{20}\) The founding year for CAISA, 1978, denotes the year NEASC’s Committee on Overseas was established and the Association formally began accrediting schools in foreign countries. CAISA became a Commission in 2004.
determining which institutions should be surveyed, it was ultimately reasoned that the most relevant and meaningful responses would come from school leaders at institutions that recently experienced an accreditation visit. Therefore, only the institutions that hosted visiting teams after 2002 were selected for the survey.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} Note that if schools that had hosted visiting teams prior to 2002 were included in the survey, the respondents’ answers would reflect self-study experiences dating one to two years preceding the evaluation visit since schools typically begin their self-studies 12 to 15 months prior to their evaluation visits. It was therefore believed that by including schools that hosted visiting teams before 2002, survey results would be compromised because many responses would reflect self-study experiences dating six years back or more thereby detracting from the relevance of the responses to today’s practices and contexts.
K-12 Schools:
Results, Quantitative Section
K-12 Schools

The NEASC Accreditation and Quality of Education Survey began with a quantitative section composed of 31 statements to which respondents were instructed to indicate their level of agreement using a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, not certain). For a complete list of survey questions, refer to Appendix A.1.  

Results of the K-12 survey reveal that most school leaders believe that accreditation has positively impacted the quality of education at their schools. They also report that accreditation has had a long-term impact on school improvement—that is, accreditation has affected their schools beyond the few days of the team evaluation visit. A majority of school leaders indicate that participation in accreditation has positively impacted teaching and learning and has improved the quality of classroom instruction at their schools. Survey feedback also indicates that accreditation has enhanced professional development, staff collaboration and overall institutional effectiveness.

Profile of Respondents and Schools

In general, the pool of respondents reflects the diversity of the NEASC membership in terms of the regional setting of schools, the respondents’ experience based on the number of years they have served in their current position, enrollment and demographic characteristics. Schools also vary with regard to the number of years they have been involved with NEASC accreditation. For instance, some respondents represent schools that have a long history with NEASC as their initial accreditation was received prior to 1950 and, therefore, have been through a number of team evaluation visits and self-studies. In contrast, other schools in the sample received their initial accreditation only within the last five to ten years. These schools are much newer to the accreditation process, lacking previous experience in undertaking a self-study or hosting an evaluation team.

21 “Strongly agree” and “Agree” are combined in the ‘Agree’ responses while “Strongly disagree” and “Disagree” responses are combined in the “Disagree” responses.
Results of the *Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005*

Table 5: Regional representation of respondents/state populations as percentage of New England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage of surveyed school leaders</th>
<th>State population as a percentage of New England population*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The percentage of respondents from each state in New England is in close proportion to each state’s population as a percentage of the total New England population. As shown in Table 5, the state with the greatest representation is Massachusetts, with 46% of school leaders surveyed based in this state. This is approximately proportional to the ratio of the state’s population to the entire New England population as 45% of the total New England population lives in Massachusetts (U.S. Census Bureau data, 2003 population estimates22). About one-quarter of the survey respondents (24%) are from Connecticut and the state similarly constitutes 25% of New England’s total population. Slightly more than one-tenth of the respondents (12%) were based in New Hampshire, a state where just under one-tenth of the New England population (9%) resides. School leaders from Vermont were somewhat underrepresented as 3% of the respondents were based in Vermont while the state makes up 8% of the total New England population. Two percent of the respondents did not specify their states and are classified as “Unspecified” in Table 5.

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22 Note that 2003 populations were chosen since respondents’ school enrollments and other school statistics discussed in this report are based on academic-year 2002-2003 figures.
As shown in Table 6, the sample consists primarily of senior-level administrators such as principals, headmasters, heads of schools, directors and superintendents. Of the 102 respondents representing public secondary schools, there are 77 principals, five assistant or vice principals, one assistant superintendent, one curriculum coordinator, one academic dean, two department chairs or coordinators, one headmaster and 13 respondents who do not specify their positions and so are listed as “Unspecified.”

Of the 28 public elementary and middle school leaders, 23 are principals and one is an assistant principal; four respondents do not specify their positions.

Of the 12 respondents representing technical and career schools, three are principals, two are directors, five are superintendents and one is a director of curriculum and instruction; one respondent does not specify his/her position.

Of the 84 independent K-12 school respondents, there are 41 principals, ten headmasters, 18 heads of school, two assistant heads, one school director, one superintendent, three presidents, two assistant principals, one technology coordinator, and one administrative assistant; four respondents do not specify their positions.

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23 Individuals selected for the survey were solicited because they were NEASC’s primary contact at their school and so were also most likely the ones responsible for overseeing the self-study at their schools.
Table 7: Number of years respondents have worked in current school leadership position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission/Type of institution</th>
<th>1 year or less</th>
<th>1 to 5 years</th>
<th>6 to 10 years</th>
<th>11 to 15 years</th>
<th>16 to 20 years</th>
<th>More than 20 years</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Secondary Schools</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Elementary/Middle Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Career Institutions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent K-12 Schools</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>226</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents vary in terms of the number of years they have been in their current position of school leadership at the time of the survey. A relatively large number of respondents have fewer than five years of experience in their current position, as Table 7 shows: there are 28 respondents (12%) who have been in their current position for one year or less and over one-third (35%) have been in their current position for one to five years. Thus, nearly half the respondents (47%) have been in their current position for fewer than five years.

Forty-two percent of respondents have been in their current position for more than five years. Nearly one-third (31%) have been in their current position for five to 15 years and 21 respondents (9%) have from ten to 15 years of experience in their current position. Ten respondents (4%) have 16 to 20 years of experience in their current position and 15 respondents (7%) have been in their current position for over 20 years. Worth noting is that approximately half the respondents in the public schools (i.e. CPSS, CPEMS and CTCI member schools) have fewer than five years experience in their current position at their school—55% of public secondary school leaders, 46% of public elementary and middle school leaders and 83% of technical and career school leaders have been in their current position at their school for fewer than five years.
Table 8: Number of years schools have been involved with accreditation (based on year of initial accreditation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission/Type of institution</th>
<th>75 years or more</th>
<th>50 to 75 years</th>
<th>25 to 59 years</th>
<th>10 to 25 years</th>
<th>Less than 10 years</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Secondary Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Elementary/Middle Schools</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Career Institutions</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent K-12 Schools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commissions founded less than 25 years ago would not have had any member schools prior to 1980. Thus, the years that respondents' schools have been involved in accreditation are not applicable for more recently established Commissions like CPEMS and CAISA, both given Commission status after 1980.

NEASC sought to have a respondent pool that would reflect the experiences and attitudes of institutions that have been involved with the accreditation process for different lengths of time; in other words, the most desirable sample would include both respondents representing schools that have been involved with regional accreditation for several years as well as newcomers to the accreditation process. Of course, the Commissions that were founded earliest have the highest number of member institutions participating in regional accreditation for over half a century. In contrast, the newer Commissions such as CPEMS and CAISA, which gained Commission status in 1984 and 2004, respectively, have more member schools that have experienced only one self-study and team evaluation visit to date.

Overall, surveyed school leaders represented schools that vary with regard to the length of time they have been involved with NEASC accreditation. As shown in Table 8, 163 schools (72%) received their initial accreditation over ten years ago: nine schools (4%) had their initial evaluation 75 years ago (in 1930 or before); 59 schools (26%) had their initial accreditation 50 to 75 years ago; 41 schools (18%) had their initial accreditation 25 to 50 years ago and 55 schools (24%) had their initial accreditation less than ten years ago. The initial accreditation year could not be identified for eight schools and so these schools are classified in Table 8 as “Unspecified.”
K-12 survey respondents represent schools with varying levels of student enrollment ranging from less than 500 students to more than 2,000 students. As Table 9 shows, 20 of the 102 public secondary school schools in the survey enroll fewer than 500 students, 35 schools have 500 to 1,000 students, 24 schools have 1,000 to 1,500 students and two schools have more than 2,000 students (Table 9). Eleven respondents gave no indication of their school enrollments. These schools are classified as “Unspecified” in Table 9.

Of the 28 public elementary and middle school leaders surveyed, 13 respondents represent schools with student enrollments under 500. Twelve respondents represent schools with student enrollments between 500 and 1,500 students and 1 respondent represents a school that enrolls between 1,000 to 1,500 students. Two respondents do not specify their schools’ enrollment and so are listed in Table 9 as “Unspecified.”

Of the 12 technical and career institutions represented in the survey, four have under 500 students, seven have between 500 and 1,000 students and one has between 1,000 and 1,500 students.

Of the 84 independent K-12 schools in the survey, 65 have enrollments under 500, 14 have enrollments between 500 and 1,000 and two have enrollments between 1,000 and 1,500. Three respondents do not specify their schools’ enrollment and so are listed in Table 9 as “Unspecified.”
Public K-12 schools in the survey fall into one of four per pupil expenditure (PPE) groups; these groups are formed based on state reported 2003 PPE data. Schools are divided into these groups according to calculated PPE ranges based on PPE figures reported by each state. These groups go from lowest PPE range (Group 1) to highest PPE range (Group 4).

As shown in Table 10, there are a disproportionate number of schools in the lowest per pupil expenditure group (Group 1): for K-12 schools overall, 62 respondents (45%) represent schools in Group 1 (58 public secondary schools and 4 elementary and middle schools; none of the technical and career schools fall into this group).

Thirty-one respondents (22%) represent schools in Group 2 (24 public secondary schools, six public elementary and middle schools and one technical and career school).

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24 PPE groups were disaggregated initially by state. This was done to account for PPE figures which reflect cost of living differences among states and variations in the ways that states define and calculate PPE. G1 represents schools with PPEs that are in the lowest quarter for their state. For instance, in some states, per pupil expenditure figures include costs like transportation per student, major capital expenditures and/or food service, while in other states, such items may not be factored into per pupil expenditure amounts. In addition, some states calculate per pupil expenditures by district and then grade range while other states might limit per pupil expenditure figures by a district’s K-12 per student expenditure figure disregarding grade range altogether.

One adjustment was made in calculating the four PPE group ranges for each state by dividing each state’s public elementary/middle and secondary schools into quarters, statistical outliers were excluded when making calculations; two schools located in Cape Cod, MA (Rowe with a PPE of $18,392 and Provincetown with a PPE of $16,392), Massachusetts have per pupil expenditures that are far above the state average (exceeding $16,000 per pupil) to account for higher cost of living expenses in this area. Given that these numbers would offset the PPE group ranges and thus distort the PPE data, they were excluded in calculations of Massachusetts' PPE groups.
There are 28 schools (20%) in Group 3 (13 public secondary schools, seven public elementary and middle schools and eight technical and career schools).

Nineteen respondents (13%) represent schools in Group 4 (5 public secondary schools, 11 public elementary and middle schools and three technical and career schools).

Table 11: Number of independent K-12 schools in each tuition group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission/Type of Institution</th>
<th>Group 1 (Lowest PPEs)</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5 (Highest PPEs)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent K-12 Schools</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Schools in Each Group out of Total</th>
<th>54%</th>
<th>17%</th>
<th>7%</th>
<th>11%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The independent K-12 schools represented in the survey are grouped by tuition charges in Table 11. Since there is generally great variation in the amount of tuition charged by independent K-12 schools, five groups of tuition ranges were created (as opposed to four for public schools).

The groups range from lowest tuition range, represented by Group 1, to highest tuition range, represented by Group 5. Group 1 includes schools that charge less than $5,000 per year in tuition. Group 2 includes schools that charge between $5,000 and $10,000. The tuition range for Group 3 is $10,000 to $15,000 and the tuition range for Group 4 was $15,000 to $20,000. The highest tuition range is represented by Group 5, which includes schools with tuition charges above $20,000.

As Table 11 shows, more than half of the independent schools (54%) are in the lowest tuition group (Group 1, which includes 54% of independent schools); 17% of the independent K-12 schools are in Group 2; Group 3 has only 7% of independent K-12 schools and Group 4 has 11% of schools. Only 10% of independent K-12 schools represented in the survey were in the highest tuition range group, Group 5.

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25 Tuition charges are for academic-year 2002-2003.
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Figure 1: Range of per pupil expenditures for public secondary schools

![Graph showing the range of per pupil expenditures for public secondary schools.](image)

- Lowest = $5,335
- Median = $8,119
- Average = $8,608
- Highest = $14,492

Public Secondary School Respondents

Figure 2: Range of per pupil expenditures for public elementary and middle schools

![Graph showing the range of per pupil expenditures for public elementary and middle schools.](image)

- Lowest = $7,179
- Median = $10,577
- Average = $11,236
- Highest = $12,410

Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents
Figure 3: Range of tuition charges for independent schools

2003 Tuition Charges

Lowest = $1,600
Median = $4,200
Average = $6,983
Highest = $27,300
Key Finding 1:

Over 90% of school leaders surveyed believe that participation in the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education at their school.

Over three-quarters of the respondents believe that participation in accreditation has improved the quality of classroom instruction.

More than three-quarters of respondents agree that participation in the accreditation process will improve teaching and learning at their school in the future.

Impact on quality of education

Ninety-two percent of respondents (207 of 226) agree that the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education at their institution (Statement 1, Table 12). Similar results are observed for respondents representing different types of schools (i.e. CPEMS, CPSS, CTCI and CIS member schools).

- 91 of 102 public secondary school leaders surveyed (89%) believe that participation in the accreditation process has enhanced the quality of education at their school; six respondents disagree while five are uncertain.

- 24 of 28 elementary and middle school leaders (86%) agree that participation in the accreditation process has enhanced the quality of education at their school; three respondents disagree while one is uncertain.

- All 12 technical and career school leaders (100%) agree that participation in accreditation has improved the quality of education at their institution.
76 of 84 independent school leaders (90%) believe that participation in accreditation has enhanced their school’s quality of education; 3 respondents disagree while one is uncertain.

Figure 4:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that the accreditation process has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education at their school.
Table 12: Percent who agreed or strongly agreed with Statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Secondary School Respondents</th>
<th>Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents</th>
<th>Technical and Career School Respondents</th>
<th>Independent K-12 School Respondents</th>
<th>Total Across 4 Commissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation process has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education at my institution.</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 8:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning at my institution.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact on classroom instruction

More than three-quarters of K-12 survey respondents (177 of 226 or 78%) agree that participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction at their school (Statement 2, Table 12); 35 respondents disagree while 14 are uncertain.

Some differences are observed comparing public and independent schools: 80% of public school leaders believe the quality of classroom instruction has improved whereas a slightly smaller share of independent school leaders (74%) responds similarly.

Some schools have better classroom resources than others so that well-resourced institutions typically receive fewer recommendations addressing classroom instruction. For instance, schools with excellent resources to support a strong instructional program are less likely than under-resourced schools to receive recommendations from visiting teams calling for improvements to classroom instruction. Likewise, schools with outdated instructional materials combined with ineffective teaching practices are more likely to receive recommendations calling for changes geared toward

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26 Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
improving classroom instruction. The latter would therefore witness greater effects on classroom instruction owing to accreditation than would the former.

- 83 of 102 public secondary school leaders (81%) agree that participation in the accreditation process has improved classroom instruction; 12 respondents in this group disagree while seven are uncertain.

- 22 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (79%) report that accreditation has improved classroom instruction; four respondents disagree and two are uncertain.

- 10 of 12 technical and career school leaders (83%) agree that participation in the accreditation process has improved classroom instruction; one respondent disagrees while one is uncertain.

- 62 of 84 independent school respondents (74%) believe the accreditation process has improved classroom instruction; 18 respondents disagree and four are uncertain.

Impact on teaching and learning

The majority of survey respondents (186 of 225 or 83%) agree that “the Standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning” at their schools (Statement 8, Table 12). While all groups of respondents report that their Commission’s Standards “will help improve teaching and learning,” a slightly larger share of independent K-12 and technical and career school leaders believe that accreditation will improve teaching and learning at their school.

- 83 of 102 public secondary school leaders (81%) agree that the Standards set by their Commission will improve teaching and learning at their school; 12 respondents disagree while seven are uncertain.
• Among public elementary and middle schools, 22 of 28 respondents (79%) believe their school’s participation in the accreditation process will improve teaching and learning; four respondents disagree and two are uncertain.

• 10 of 12 technical and career school leaders (83%) agree that their Commission’s Standards will improve teaching and learning; one respondent disagrees while one is uncertain.

• Among independent schools, 71 of 83 respondents (86%) indicate that their Commission’s Standards will improve teaching and learning; nine respondents disagree and three are uncertain.\(^{27}\)

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\(^{27}\) The independent K-12 school leader did not answer this question leaving 83 instead of 84 independent school respondents for this question.
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Figure 7a: Percent of public school respondents who agree with statements on survey by PPE group

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into PPE groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each PPE group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.
As Figure 7a shows, there are no major differences in the proportion of public school leaders in the four PPE groups who agree that the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education at their school (Statement 1). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 87%, 90%, 96% and 94%, respectively.28

While a majority of respondents from public schools agree that participation in accreditation has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction (Statement 2), one noticeable trend is that as per pupil expenditure increases, fewer school leaders agree that participation in accreditation has improved classroom instruction. A higher proportion of respondents in Groups 1 and 2 agree with Statement 2 (80% and 79%, respectively) while the proportion of Group 4 respondents who agree is 20 percentage points lower (60%), suggesting that the accreditation process positively impacts classroom instruction at schools that have relatively lower PPEs. Further study may help identify reasons that explain why accreditation has a greater positive impact on classroom instruction at schools in the lower PPE groups in their state.

Similar proportions of public school respondents from the four PPE groups agree that accreditation Standards “will help improve teaching and learning” at their school (Statement 8). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 83%, 89%, 92% and 89%, respectively.

As shown by Figure 7b, the vast majority of respondents from all five independent school tuition groups agree that the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education at their school. There is less agreement from respondents in Group 3 relative to the other groups. Whereas 83% of Group 3 respondents agree with Statement 1, the percentage of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 4 and 5 who agree is 98%, 100%, 89% and 100%, respectively.

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28 Per pupil expenditure ranges for public secondary schools and technical and career schools are based on groups formed by dividing schools into four PPE groups. The PPE figures are from each state’s department of education and are for FY2004. Public secondary school ranges are as follows: G1 ($6,962 to $8,594); G2 ($8,595 to $10,226); G3 ($10,227 to $11,858) and G4 ($11,859 to $13,490). Public secondary school ranges for Maine, which are based on per pupil operating costs, are as follows: G1 ($5,208 to $7,860); G2 ($7,861 to $10,512); G3 ($10,513 to $13,164) and G4 ($13,165 to $15,816). Public secondary school ranges for Massachusetts are as follows: G1 ($5,720 to $8,162); G2 ($8,163 to 10,604); G3 (10,605 to 13,046) and G4 (13,047 to 15,488). Public secondary school ranges for New Hampshire are as follows: G1 ($6,145 to $7,945); G2 ($7,946 to $9,745); G3 ($9,746 to $11,545) and G4 ($11,546 to $13,345). Public secondary school ranges for Rhode Island are as follows: G1 ($8,177 to $9,745); G2 ($9,746 to 11,131); G3 ($11,132 to $12,881) and G4 ($12,882 to $14,449). Public secondary school ranges for Vermont are as follows: G1 ($8,438 to $9,697); G2 ($9,698 to $10,956); G3 ($10,957 to $12,213) and G4 ($12,214 to $13,475). Public elementary school PPE ranges for Connecticut are as follows: G1 (5,720 to 8,976); G2 (8,488 to 9,986); G3 (9,987 to 11,485) and G4 (11,486 to 12,985). Public elementary school PPE ranges for Massachusetts are same as state’s public secondary school PPE ranges because PPEs in Massachusetts are only broken down by district and not by grade-level.
Greater variation is found in the proportion of respondents from the five independent school tuition groups who agree that accreditation has improved the quality of classroom instruction (Statement 2). A higher percentage of respondents in Groups 1 and 4 agree that participation in accreditation has improved classroom instruction (77% and 89%, respectively) whereas respondents from Groups 2, 3 and 5 have lower rates of agreement (64%, 67% and 63%, respectively).

Across independent school tuition groups, most respondents agree that their Commission’s standards will help improve teaching and learning at their school (Statement 8). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree with Statement 8 is 89%, 86%, 100% and 78%, respectively. In comparison, 50% of respondents in Group 5 agree with Statement 8. Further inquiry may provide explanations for these differences.
Key Finding 2:

Over 80% of school leaders report that accreditation impacts school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term.

Short-term and long-term impact on school improvement

Survey feedback reveals that 84% of K-12 school leaders (188 of 225) agree that the accreditation process affects school improvement in both the short and long-term (Statement 18, Table 13); 18 respondents disagree while 19 are uncertain.

Institutions undergo full comprehensive visits on a ten-year cycle, launched by a self-study usually begun 12 to 18 months before a decennial visit, yet the intended aim of accreditation is to stimulate continuous improvement even after the completion of the evaluation visit. The Association sought to determine if the impact of accreditation is, indeed, perceived by institutions as long-term; that is, extending well beyond the period of days surrounding the team visit. After all, the goal of accreditation is continuous school improvement. Results from the survey affirm this notion as more than eight of every ten school leaders report that accreditation impacts school improvement in both the short-run and long-run.

The high number of respondents in the ‘Not Certain’ category was expected given that several respondents, specifically, public elementary and middle school leaders, represent schools new to the accreditation process. That said, these schools would be unable to gauge the long-term impact of accreditation since they may have only recently begun implementing recommendations from their first visit. Even though a number of them were uncertain, still, the clear majority of public elementary and middle school leaders agree that the process engendered ongoing school improvement.

- Among public secondary schools, 82 of 101 respondents (81%) agree that the accreditation
process impacts school improvement in both the short- and long-term; 12 respondents disagree and seven are uncertain.  

- 23 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (82%) believe that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short- and long-term; one respondent disagrees and four are uncertain.

- 11 of 12 technical and career school leaders (92%) agree that accreditation impacts school improvement in both the short- and long-term; one respondent disagrees.

- Among independent schools, 72 of 84 respondents (86%) indicate that accreditation affects school improvement in the short- and long-term basis; four respondents disagree while eight are uncertain.

| Table 13: Percent who agreed or strongly agreed with Statements in left column |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Statement on Survey | Public Secondary School Respondents | Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents | Technical and Career School Respondents | Independent K-12 School Respondents | Total Across 4 Commissions |
| Statement 18: I believe accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term. | 81% | 82% | 92% | 86% | 84% |

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20One public secondary school respondent did not answer this question leaving 101 instead of 102 respondents for this question.

30Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Key Finding 3:

Over two-thirds of school leaders indicate that they “would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.”

Ensuring educational quality in New England

Over two-thirds of survey respondents surveyed (160 of 226 or 71%) indicate that they “would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England” (Statement 27, Table 14); 36 of 226 respondents disagree while 36 are uncertain.

Results vary somewhat across the Commissions: three-quarters of school leaders representing public secondary, independent K-12 and technical and career schools believe the educational quality of NEASC member schools would deteriorate absent accreditation. A slightly smaller proportion of public elementary school leaders (about one-half) feel similarly. Yet, this was expected for reasons mentioned earlier: elementary and middle schools are, in general, much newer to the accreditation process and are not as likely to have fully experienced the effect of participation in the accreditation process over several years in the same way that most public secondary, independent K-12 or technical and career schools have. In other words, many of the accredited public elementary and middle schools had received their initial accreditation only within the last five years. Therefore, these schools are less likely to have witnessed the long-term effects of accreditation.

- Among public secondary schools, 74 of 102 respondents (73%) claim they “would worry that the quality of accredited institutions would deteriorate” absent accreditation; 15 respondents indicate they would not worry and 19 are uncertain.

- 15 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (54%) believe that the quality of accredited institutions would deteriorate absent accreditation; seven respondents indicate they would not worry while six are uncertain.
Among technical and career schools, 10 of 12 respondents (83%) agree the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate absent accreditation; none of these respondents report they would not worry and two are uncertain.

61 of 84 independent school leaders (73%) agree that the educational quality of accredited institutions would deteriorate absent accreditation; 14 respondents claim they would not worry and nine are uncertain.

Figure 9:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.

Table 14: Percent who agreed or strongly agreed with Statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Secondary School Respondents</th>
<th>Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents</th>
<th>Technical and Career School Respondents</th>
<th>Independent K-12 School Respondents</th>
<th>Total Across 4 Commissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 27: I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Figure 10a: Percent of public school respondents who agree with statements on survey by PPE group

Statement 18: "I believe accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term."

Statement 27: I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England in American international schools abroad.

Figure 10b: Percent of independent school respondents who agree with statements on survey by tuition group

Statement 18: "I believe accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term."

Statement 27: I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England in American international schools abroad.

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into PPE groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each PPE group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.
As Figure 10a shows, there are no major differences in the proportion of public school respondents from the four PPE groups who agree that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short- and long-term (Statement 18). The percentage of respondents in Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 76%, 80 percent, 88% and 84%, respectively.

Similar proportions of public school respondents from the four PPE groups indicate that they would worry that the educational quality of NEASC member schools would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England (Statement 27). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 63%, 73%, 65% and 74%, respectively.

As Figure 10b shows, most respondents from all five independent school groups agree that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short- and long-term (Statement 18), with the highest rates of agreement observed for all but the highest tuition group. The percentage of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 84%, 86%, 100% and 89%, respectively. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents from Group five who agree (63%) is more than 20 percentage points less than the other groups.

With the exception of respondents from Group 2, more than two-thirds of independent school respondents from Group 1 (68%), Group 3 (83%) Group 4 (78%) and Group 5 (75%) indicate that they “would worry that the educational quality of NEASC member schools would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England” (Statement 27). In contrast, 27% of respondents from Group 2 respond similarly.
Key Finding 4:

More than two-thirds of school leaders surveyed agree that participation in accreditation has led to improvement in:

- professional development training for teachers
- classroom and non-classroom environments as well as the work environment
- school organization management
- school leadership

Impact on professional development

Among all 226 K-12 survey respondents, 156 or 69% agree that participation in accreditation has improved professional development training for teachers (Statement 3, Table 15); 53 respondents disagree and 17 are uncertain. Findings are generally consistent across the Commissions.

- 66 of 102 public secondary school leaders (65%) agree that professional development training for teachers has improved; 24 respondents disagree while 17 are uncertain.

- Among public elementary and middle schools, 21 of 28 respondents (75%) believe that professional development training for teachers improved; six respondents disagree and two are uncertain.

- 9 of 12 technical and career school leaders (75%) report participation in accreditation has improved in professional development training for teachers; two respondents disagree and one is uncertain.
61 of 84 independent school leaders (73%) agree that participation in accreditation has improved professional development for teachers; 21 respondents disagree and two are uncertain.

Figure 11:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that accreditation has led to improvements in teacher professional development training at their schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Secondary School Respondents</th>
<th>Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents</th>
<th>Technical and Career School Respondents</th>
<th>Independent K-12 School Respondents</th>
<th>Total Across 4 Commissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 3:</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 11:</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 12:</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 14:</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and management at my institution.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 28:</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation process has led to improvements in institutional leadership.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Impact on school and work environment

As Table 15 shows, a majority of school leaders surveyed believe that participation in accreditation has improved the school and work environment—74% of the K-12 survey respondents (166 of 224) agree that “participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students” (Statement 11, Table 15). Meanwhile, 60% of respondents (135 of 224) agree that “participation in accreditation has led to improvements in the work environment for staff” (Statement 12, Table 15).

- Among public secondary schools, 79 of 101 respondents (78%) believe that participation in accreditation has improved the academic environment for students at their school; 18 respondents disagree while 14 are uncertain. Also, 62 of 101 respondents (61%) agree that participation in accreditation has improved the work environment for staff; 24 respondents disagree and 16 are uncertain.

- 23 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (82%) claim that participation in accreditation has improved the academic environment for students; three respondents disagree and two are uncertain. In addition, 16 of 28 respondents (57%) agree that participation in accreditation has improved the work environment for staff; eight respondents disagree and four are uncertain.

- All 12 technical and career school leaders (100%) believe that participation in accreditation has improved the academic environment at their school. And, 9 of 12 respondents (75%) believe that participation in accreditation has improved the academic environment for students at their school.

Figure 12:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that participation in accreditation has led to improvements in the classroom and non-classroom environment for students.

Figure 13:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that accreditation has led to improvements in the work climate for staff.

33 One independent school respondent did not answer this question leaving 83 instead of 84 respondents for this question.
34 One public secondary school respondent did not answer this question leaving 101 instead of 102 respondents for this question.
work environment; one respondent disagrees while two are uncertain.

- Among independent schools, 61 of 83 respondents (73%) agree that participation in accreditation has improved the academic environment; 13 respondents disagree and nine are uncertain. Also, 46 of 83 respondents (55%) believe that participation in accreditation has improved the work environment; 28 respondents disagree and nine respondents are uncertain.

Impact on school organization and management

Over two-thirds of the school leaders surveyed (166 of 223 or 74%) believe that participation in accreditation has improved the organization and management of their school, as shown by (Statement 14, Table 15). Findings are generally consistent across the Commissions although higher rates of agreement are observed among respondents from technical and career schools as the following findings show.

- 67 of 102 public secondary school leaders (66%) agree that organization and management at their school improved as a result of accreditation; 22 respondents disagree while 13 are uncertain.

- Among public elementary and middle schools, 19 of 28 respondents (68%) agree that school organization and management has improved as a result of accreditation; seven respondents disagree and two are uncertain.

- 11 of 12 technical and career school leaders (92%) believe that participation in accreditation improved school organization and management; none of the respondents disagree while one respondent is uncertain.

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35One independent school respondent did not answer this question leaving 83 instead of 84 respondents for this question.
• Among independent schools, 69 of 81 respondents (85%) report that school organization and management improved at their school due to accreditation; 11 respondents disagree and one is uncertain.

![Figure 14: Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that participation in accreditation led to improvements in organization and management at their school.](chart_image)

**Impact on school leadership**

*Overall, 153 of 224 school leaders (68%) report that the accreditation process led to improvements in institutional leadership (Statement 28, Table 15).*

As expected, there is some variation in findings among schools of the different Commissions. This variation was expected given that schools vary in terms of leadership structures and resources available to administrators. The qualitative results in the next section of this report, demonstrate that accreditation has assisted many school leaders with planning and decision-making. Respondents claim that the Standards and visiting team recommendations have provided them with a blueprint for strategic planning. Respondents report that the process fosters collegiality and collaborative decision-making, thereby promoting more effective leadership.

Although most respondents in general express favorable views about the impact of accreditation on institutional leadership, public elementary and middle and technical and career schools appear to experience the greatest gains to leadership due to accreditation.
• Among public secondary schools, 64 of 102 respondents (63%) believe that accreditation led to improvements in institutional leadership; 24 respondents disagree and 13 are uncertain.

• 21 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (75%) report that institutional leadership improved due to the accreditation process; four respondents disagree while three are uncertain.

• 11 of 12 technical and career school leaders (92%) agree that accreditation improved institutional leadership; none of the respondents disagree while one is uncertain.

• Among independent schools, 57 of 82 respondents (69%) believe institutional leadership improved because of accreditation; 20 respondents disagree and five are uncertain.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) Two independent school respondents did not answer this question leaving 82 instead of 84 respondents for this question.
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Figure 16a: Percent of public school respondents who agree with statements on survey by PPE group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>PPE Group 1 (N=63)</th>
<th>PPE Group 2 (N=31)</th>
<th>PPE Group 3 (N=28)</th>
<th>PPE Group 4 (N=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 3: Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 11: Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 12: Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the staff.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 14: Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the staff.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 28: The accreditation process has led to improvements in institutional leadership.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into PPE groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each PPE group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.
As Figure 16a shows, a slightly higher percentage of public school respondents in Groups 1, 2 and 3 agree that accreditation improved professional development training for teachers at their school (Statement 3) compared to respondents in the highest PPE group, Group 4. Whereas over two-thirds of respondents in Groups 1, 2 and 3 agree with Statement 3, (66%, 69% and 70%, respectively), the percentage of respondents from Group 4 who agree is 54%.

Over three-quarters of respondents in all PPE groups agree that participation in accreditation led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment (Statement 11), yet a slightly higher share of respondents in Groups 3 and 4 agree, as Figure 3a shows. The percentage of respondents who agree with Statement 11 is 71% for Group 1, 72% for Group 2, 81% for Group 3 and 84% for Group 4.

The majority of respondents in all four public school PPE groups agree that the accreditation process improved the work environment for staff at their school (Statement 12), yet the highest rates of agreement are observed for Groups 1 and 2, with 75% and 67% of respondents agreeing. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents from Groups 4 and 5 who agree with Statement 12 is 57% and 61%, respectively.

While a majority of respondents in all of the public school PPE groups agree that participation in accreditation improved school organization and management at their school (Statement 14), a higher percentage of respondents in Groups 3 and 4 agree than respondents in Groups 1 and 2. The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree with Statement 14 is 62%, 59%, 81% and 79%, respectively.

A higher percentage of respondents in public school PPE Groups 3 and 4 agree that accreditation improved institutional leadership (Statement 28) than respondents in Groups 1 and 2. Whereas 70% of respondents in Group 4 agree with Statement 28, the percentage of respondents from Groups 1 and 2 who agree is 51% and 64%, respectively.

As Figure 16b shows, there is some variation in the percentage of respondents in the five independent school tuition groups who agree that accreditation has improved professional development training for teachers at their school (Statement 3). Whereas a majority of respondents in Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 agree that accreditation improved professional development training for teachers, (68%, 79%, 100% and 89%, respectively), the
percentage of respondents in the highest tuition group, Group 5, who agree is 38%.

While most respondents across independent school tuition groups agree that accreditation improved the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment for students (Statement 11), higher rates of agreement are observed for Groups 1 (74%), Group 3 (100%) and Group 4 (78%). The percentage of respondents in Groups 2 and 5 who agree with Statement 11 is slightly lower (57% and 63%, respectively).

With the exception of respondents in Group 2, respondents in all other independent school tuition groups agree that accreditation has improved the work environment for staff at their school (Statement 12). The percentage of respondents in Groups 1, 3, 4 and 5 who agree is 70%, 67%, 78% and 63%, respectively. In contrast, less than half the respondents in Group 2 (43%) agree with Statement 12.

Similar proportions of independent school respondents from the 5 tuition groups agree that participation in accreditation improved organization and management at their school (Statement 14), though a slightly lower percentage of respondents in Group 3 agree: the breakdown of respondents in Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 who agree is 88%, 85%, 67%, 89% and 88%, respectively.

A majority of independent school respondents in the five tuition groups agree that accreditation has improved institutional leadership at their school (Statement 28), though some variation is observed. The breakdown of respondents in Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 who agree is 70%, 62%, 100%, 67% and 88%, respectively.
Key Finding 5:

More than 80% of school leaders surveyed believe that participation in accreditation has resulted in better staff communication. Over two-thirds of these respondents agree that participation in accreditation has led to greater staff teamwork.

Impact on staff communication

Among all 226 K-12 survey respondents, 185 or 82% agree that participation in the accreditation process led to better staff communication at their school (Statement 4, Table 16); 24 respondents disagree while 17 are uncertain.

- 79 of 102 public secondary school leaders (78%) report that participation in accreditation resulted in better staff communication; 11 respondents disagree and 12 are uncertain.

- Among public elementary and middle schools, 24 of 28 respondents (86%) believe that participation in accreditation led to better staff communication; the remaining four respondents disagree.

- 11 of 12 technical and career school leaders (92%) agree that accreditation resulted in better staff communication at their school; none of the respondents from this group disagree and one is uncertain.

- Among independent schools, 71 of 84 respondents (85%) believe participation in accreditation led to better staff communication; nine respondents disagree and four are uncertain.
### Table 16: Percent who agree or strongly agree with statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Secondary School Respondents</th>
<th>Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents</th>
<th>Technical and Career School Respondents</th>
<th>Independent K-12 School Respondents</th>
<th>Total Across 4 Commissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 4:</strong> The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 5:</strong> Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Impact on teamwork**

*More than two-thirds of K-12 survey respondents (166 of 226 or 73%) agree that participation in accreditation resulted in greater staff teamwork at their school (Statement 5, Table 16).*

- Among public secondary schools, 63 of 102 respondents (62%) agree that participation in accreditation led to greater teamwork among staff; 14 respondents disagree and 15 are uncertain.

- 22 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (79%) believe that participation in accreditation resulted in greater teamwork among staff; the remaining six respondents from this group disagree.

- Among the technical and career schools, 10 of 12 respondents (83%) believe participation in accreditation resulted in greater teamwork among staff; one respondent disagrees while one is uncertain.

- 71 of 84 independent school leaders (85%) agree that participation in accreditation led to more teamwork among staff; seven respondents disagree while 6 are uncertain.

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37Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Figure 18:
Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that participation in accreditation led to more teamwork among staff.

Agr ee, 73%
Disagree, 12%
Not Certain, 10%
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Figure 19a: Percent of public school respondents who agree with statements on survey by PPE group

![Bar chart showing percent agreement by PPE group](chart19a.png)

- **Statement 4:** The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.
- **Statement 5:** Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff.

**PPE Groups and Percent Agreement:**
- **G1:** lowest per pupil expenditure (N=63)
  - 79%
  - 80%
  - 89%
  - 84%
- **G2** (N=31)
- **G3** (N=28)
- **G4:** highest per pupil expenditure (N=19)
  - 78%
  - 84%
  - 84%

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into PPE groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each PPE group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.

Figure 19b: Percent of independent school respondents who agree with statements on survey by tuition group

![Bar chart showing percent agreement by tuition range](chart19b.png)

- **Statement 4:** The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.
- **Statement 5:** Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff.

**Tuition Groups and Percent Agreement:**
- **G1:** tuition less than $5,000 (N=44)
  - 80%
  - 93%
  - 100%
  - 89%
  - 75%
- **G2:** tuition range = $5,000 to $10,000 (N=14)
- **G3:** tuition range = $10,000 to $15,000 (N=6)
- **G4:** tuition range = $15,000 to $20,000 (N=9)
- **G5:** tuition more than $20,000 (N=8)

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into tuition groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each tuition group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.
As Figure 19a shows, there are no major differences in the proportion of public school leaders who agree that the accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication (Statement 4). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 79%, 80%, 89% and 84%, respectively.

Likewise, there are no major differences in the proportion of public school leaders who agree that participation in accreditation has led to more teamwork among staff (Statement 5). The percentage of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 who agree is 76%, 85%, 78% and 84%, respectively.

As shown by Figure 19b, at least three-quarters of respondents from all 5 independent school tuition groups agree that the accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication (Statement 4). Higher rates of agreement are observed for Groups 2, 3 and 4, with 93%, 100% and 89% agreeing, respectively. For Groups 1 and 5, the percentage of respondents who agree is slightly lower (80% and 75%, respectively).

While a majority of independent school respondents in all 5 tuition groups agree that participation in accreditation has led to more teamwork among staff (Statement 5), higher rates of agreement are observed in Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 (84%, 93%, 83% and 89%, respectively). Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents in Group 5 who agree is 75%.
Key Finding 6:

Over 85% of school leaders surveyed agree their school was fairly evaluated and the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough. Also, more than three-quarters of school leaders agree their schools received sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit. Most respondents also report that their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.

Fairness of team evaluations

Overall, 197 of 226 K-12 survey respondents (87%) agree that their school was fairly evaluated (Statement 19 of Table 17).

- 84 of 102 public secondary school leaders (82%) agree their school was fairly evaluated; 12 respondents disagree and six are uncertain.

- 27 of 28 elementary and middle school leaders (96%) agree their school was fairly evaluated; one respondent disagrees.

- All 12 technical and career school leaders (100%) believe their school was fairly evaluated; none of the respondents disagree.

- Among independent schools, 74 of 84 respondents (88%) believe their school was fairly evaluated; nine respondents disagree and one is uncertain.
### Table 17: Percent who agreed or strongly agreed with Statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Secondary School Respondents</th>
<th>Public Elementary and Middle School Respondents</th>
<th>Technical and Career School Respondents</th>
<th>Independent K-12 School Respondents</th>
<th>Total Across 4 Commissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 19:</td>
<td>My institution was fairly evaluated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 22:</td>
<td>My institution was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 9:</td>
<td>The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 20:</td>
<td>The Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
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<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Training prior to evaluation visit**

*Among all K-12 survey respondents, 88% of school leaders (198 of 226) agree their school “was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit;” 18 respondents disagree while ten are uncertain (Statement 22, Table 17).*

The self-study is an intense process which requires schools to complete a thorough self-evaluation to determine if accreditation Standards are being met. Self-studies are ordinarily undertaken for 12 to 18 months prior to the team evaluation visit and necessitate the involvement of the entire school staff.

- 88 of 102 public secondary school leaders (86%) believe their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit; eight respondents disagree while six are uncertain.

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38Percentages are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
• 27 of 28 elementary and middle school leaders (96%) agree their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit; one respondent disagrees.

• Among technical and career schools, 8 of 12 respondents (67%) agree their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit; two respondents disagree while two are uncertain.

• 75 of 84 independent K-12 school leaders (89%) believe their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit; seven respondents disagree while six are uncertain.

Integrity of team recommendations

Overall feedback from school leaders suggests that the recommendations of the visiting team are helpful: 84% of school leaders (188 of 224) agree “the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough;” 31 respondents disagree while five are uncertain (Statement 9, Table 17).

The integrity of the accreditation process is critical and largely reliant on the degree to which schools perceive the recommendations made to their schools as legitimate. The peer-review process, by nature, is intended to prevent bias and uphold validity because team evaluators are experienced educators as well as trained volunteers who can relate to the issues and challenges that other schools confront.

• Among public secondary schools, 84 of 100 respondents (84%) agree that the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough; 15 respondents disagree while one is uncertain.

• 25 of 28 public elementary and middle school leaders (89%) report their school received valid and thorough recommendations from the visiting team. The remaining three respondents disagree.

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39 Two respondents did not answer this question leaving 224 instead of 226 respondents.

40 Two public secondary school respondents did not answer this question leaving 100 instead of 102 respondents for this question.
• All 12 technical and career school leaders (100%) agree their school received valid and thorough recommendations from their visiting team; none of the respondents disagree.

• 67 of 84 independent school leaders (80%) agree that the recommendations made by the visiting team were valid and thorough; one respondent disagrees while four are uncertain.

Guidance and support after the evaluation visit

The majority of school leaders in our survey (175 of 226 or 77%) agree that their Commissions provided sufficient guidance and support following the evaluation visit; 36 respondents disagree while 15 are uncertain (Statement 20, Table 17). Attitudes of school leaders from different Commissions are fairly consistent.

• 79 of 102 public secondary school leaders (77%) agree their school was received sufficient guidance and support following the evaluation visit; 17 respondents disagree and six are uncertain.

• Among public elementary and middle schools, 19 of 28 respondents (68%) agree their school received sufficient guidance and support following the evaluation visit; five respondents disagree and four are uncertain.

• 10 of 12 technical and career school leaders (83%) believe their Commission provided sufficient support and guidance following the evaluation visit; the remaining two respondents disagree.

• 67 of 84 independent K-12 school leaders (80%) agree their school received sufficient guidance and support following the evaluation visit; 12 respondents disagree and five are uncertain.

Figure 23:

Percent of respondents who agree, disagree or are not certain that their Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.
Figure 24a: Percent of public school respondents who agree with statements on survey by PPE group

Figure 24b: Percent of independent school respondents who agree with statements on survey by tuition group

Note: The number of schools in each group represents the overall number of schools that were initially categorized into PPE groups but in some cases, not all respondents may have answered a particular question. The percentages shown in the bar graph are based on the number of respondents who answered that specific question. In most cases, all respondents from each PPE group answered the question. Typically, only 1 or 2 respondents may not have answered.
As Figure 24a shows, over three-quarters of public school respondents from all 4 PPE groups agree that their school was fairly evaluated (Statement 19). The highest rates of agreement are observed for Groups 2, 3 and 4 (93%, 96% and 94% respectively). The percentage of respondents from Group 1 who agree with Statement 19 is 78%.

While a majority of public school respondents from all four PPE groups agree that their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit (Statement 22), a slightly higher percentage of respondents from Group 2—96%—agree compared to the other groups; the percentage of respondents from Groups 1, 3 and 4 who agree with Statement 22 is 83%, 78% and 78%, respectively.

There is some variation observed in the proportion of respondents who agree that the recommendations of the visiting team are valid and thorough (Statement 9). A slightly higher percentage of respondents in Groups 2 and 3 agree with Statement 9 (96% and 92%, respectively) whereas lower rates of agreement are observed for Groups 1 and 3 (78% and 83%, respectively).

With the exception of Group 2, a majority of public school respondents from the other PPE groups agree their Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit (Statement 20). The percentage of respondents from Groups 2, 3 and 4 who agree with Statement 20 is 88%, 78% and 67%, respectively, while for Group 1, the percentage of respondents who agree is 41%.

As Figure 24b shows, there are no major differences in the proportion of independent school respondents from the five tuition groups who agree their school was fairly evaluated (Statement 19). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 who agree is 83%, 86%, 100%, 89% and 100%, respectively.

Most independent school respondents from all five tuition groups also agree that their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit (Statement 22). The percentage of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 who agree is 86%, 100%, 100%, 78% and 100%, respectively.

Over three-quarters of independent school respondents from all five tuition groups agree that the recommendations set by the visiting team were valid and thorough (Statement 9); the highest rate of agreement is observed in
Group 3 (100% agree). The percentage of respondents who agree with Statement 9 from the other tuition groups is 78% (Group 1), 79% (Group 2), 78% (Group 4) and 88% (Group 5).

Similar proportions of independent school respondents from the five tuition groups agree that their Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit (Statement 20). The breakdown of respondents from Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 who agree with Statement 20 is 73%, 86%, 83%, 89% and 75%, respectively.
K-12 Schools:
Results, Qualitative Section
Qualitative findings are drawn from K-12 school leaders’ responses to five open-ended questions. These questions followed the 31 questions in the initial quantitative section. Each question was designed to take a few minutes to answer. School leaders in our survey were instructed to continue on a separate paper if the space provided was not sufficient for all their comments. With the exception of a few, most school leaders answered all of the questions.

Responses to open-ended questions complement responses to the close-ended questions by providing a broader and richer understanding about the impact of NEASC accreditation on schools in New England and often conveying context. Moreover, giving voice to the various constituencies working in the education field allows for a holistic picture of the issues that schools confront and the practices that make them effective.

After all, no two school leaders work in like environments. Factors such as the size of the student population, the socio-economic makeup of the student body, the quality of the school building facility, the quality, quantity and accessibility of school resources like computers and library holdings, and the degree of parental involvement, influence teaching and learning in any school environment. A school’s location – whether it is located in a city, suburb or rural area – impacts the school climate as well.

Qualitative studies that draw from the knowledge and experiences of educators from schools in various settings play a critical role in guiding educational policy, yet listening to school leaders is a practice that is too often ignored in the education field. The NEASC Commissions and visiting teams work diligently to assess schools in a manner that acknowledges and appreciates the distinctions among them. Still, much can be learned from stakeholders involved directly in the process. Thus, providing opportunities for educators to voice their opinions and share experiences informs policymakers of effective practices employed in different school contexts.
Key Finding 7:

When asked how accreditation has impacted the quality of education provided at their schools, school leaders most often answered (from most to least frequently cited) that accreditation:

1. improved instruction;
2. enabled schools to identify strengths and weaknesses;
3. improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning;
4. fostered teamwork and collegiality;
5. improved school resources;
6. improved professional development;
7. made school accountable;
8. exposed school to new learning trends and innovations;
9. increased community support for school initiatives;
10. increased community and parental involvement;
11. raised staff morale;
12. led to better staffing decisions;
13. resulted in more continuity and consistency; and
14. provided staff with exposure to peer evaluators

The qualitative section’s first question was: “How has accreditation impacted the quality of education at your institution? Please provide any examples you can think of.” Table 18 shows a summary of responses and a breakdown by each Commission. Responses on returned surveys were systematically coded by tallying the most frequently cited answers. Ultimately, 14 broad categories emerged representing those school-level areas and practices that respondents claimed were impacted the most by accreditation.
Table 18: School factors impacted by accreditation according to K-12 survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent Reporting</th>
<th>Percent Reporting by Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Improved instruction</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>CPSS 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 32%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 33%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CIS 31%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPSS 22%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 60%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CPSS 32%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enabled schools to strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td>CPSS 32%</td>
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<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Led to improvement in school resources</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improved professional development</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Made school accountable</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Exposed school to new learning trends and innovations</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Increased community support for school initiatives</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Increased community and parental involvement</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Raised staff morale</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Led to better staffing decisions</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Resulted in more continuity and consistency</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CTCI 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Provided staff with exposure to peer evaluators</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPEMS 26%</td>
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<td>CTCI 8%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CIS 55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents’ answers were sub-categorized by Commission, as shown by the far right column of Table 18. The categories in Table 18 list the most frequently reported answers to Question 1 ranked from most to least frequently cited. Although there was some variation in responses by the Commission, there was far more consistency and overlap than was expected. In fact, the similarity of school leaders’ responses across the various Commissions was unexpected because of an assumption that respondents from different types of schools (i.e. schools which differ in terms of public versus private control and grade-levels served) would diverge in their views about the school-level variables that most profoundly affect the quality of education. A major finding, therefore, was that the accreditation process appears to affect very different types of schools in quite similar ways.

As shown by Table 18, surveyed school leaders reported most frequently that participation in accreditation improved instruction (Category 1, Table 18). This answer ranked first and is designated “Rank 1” in Table 18. Next, respondents reported that accreditation impacted the quality of education at their schools because it enabled their schools to effectively identify strengths and weaknesses (Category 2). The next most frequently cited response was that accreditation improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning (Category 3). After Categories 1, 2 and 3, respondents claimed that participation in the accreditation process: fostered teamwork and collegiality (Category 4); improved school resources (Category 5); improved professional development (Category 6); made their schools accountable (Category 7); exposed their school to new learning trends and innovations (Category 8); increased community support for school initiatives (Category 9); increased community and parental involvement (Category 10); raised staff morale (Category 11); led to better staffing decisions (Category 12); resulted in more continuity and consistency (Category 13); and provided staff with exposure to peer evaluators (Category 14). Each of these Categories is discussed in more detail in the following pages.

*Rank 1—Improved instruction*

When asked how accreditation has impacted the quality of education at their schools, nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported that participation in accreditation has improved instruction at their school.

This response ranked first out of the 14 most frequently cited responses, as shown by Category 1 of Table 18. Comparing the Commissions,
public secondary school (CPSS) respondents reported improvements to instruction more than any other group—over half of the public secondary school leaders (52%) cited improvements to instruction compared with 32% of public elementary and middle school (CPEMS) respondents, 33% of technical and career institution (CTCI) respondents and 31% of independent K-12 school (CIS) respondents.

Describing the ways in which accreditation stimulated instructional improvements, school leaders specifically reported that accreditation affected or led to the following:

- More student-centered instruction
- Higher expectations
- Improved curricula
- Improved assessment and use of student data
- Improved teaching practices
- Improved school schedule and courses
- Heterogeneous classes

Detailed findings are as follows:

- **More student-centered instruction**

Survey findings reveal that school leaders perceive accreditation as a process that engenders positive change by prompting more “hands-on learning” and attention to individual student needs. In some cases, the process encouraged the formation of smaller learning communities. For instance, one public secondary school principal stated that some of the recommendations and new Standards “were helpful in pushing and implementing school and district initiatives, such as smaller learning communities…” Another school principal noted that the CPSS Standards for Accreditation addressing curriculum, instruction and assessment “provided an excellent blueprint” to change from a “traditional factory model to a standards-based, student-centered model…” Student-centered instruction was indeed a common theme among responses from all four K-12 Commissions, and cited most often by public secondary school leaders. Research supports the notion that teachers working in small learning communities are better able to address the learning differences among students. Representative statements follow:

> The guidelines provided in the Standards for Mission, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment have provided an excellent blueprint to transfer our school from traditional, factory model to a standards-based, student-centered model. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)
We are trying to incorporate recommendations such as common department exams, having more student-centered instruction, focusing on higher order thinking skills. (Public Secondary School Principal, VT)

Some of the new standards and recommendations were helpful in pushing and implementing school and district initiatives, such as smaller learning communities and establishing a mentoring/significant adult program. (Public Secondary School Principal, CT)

It forced our staff (in a positive way) to review our current curriculum and make some long needed changes. We looked at more ‘hands-on’ learning and things requiring higher level thinking. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, CT)

There is more emphasis on student work. Professional learning communities are a priority. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Higher expectations

Respondents, particularly public secondary school leaders, claimed that the accreditation process led teachers and staff to raise academic expectations for students. Some indicated that raising expectations led indirectly to the reinforcement of an all-around academically rigorous program. A number of school leaders reported also that teachers reflected on their classroom behaviors and closely considered how their expectations were communicated to students.

A growing body of research demonstrates that students significantly benefit from teachers having high expectations for students since teachers’ high expectations are internalized by students (Lumsden, 1997). Visiting teams’ recommendations, often guided by research-based Standards for Accreditation, often recommend to schools that they address student expectations and the level of academic rigor at the school. Commenting on teaching behavior, for example, one public middle school principal wrote:

I believe that participation in the accreditation process has positively impacted our school. First of all, it gave all staff an opportunity to read and thoroughly learn about all of the various academic areas. This has led to more teachers and academies working on and doing interdisciplinary projects. I also believe that the staff as a whole raised their level of expectations for student learning and thus, their level of instruction and teaching was also raised. (Public Middle School Principal, CT)
Improved curricula

Several respondents reported that participation in the accreditation process improved their schools’ curriculum. Specifically, these respondents often claimed that a major impact of the accreditation process was on curriculum revision. A few respondents commented that they refer to the process when designing or reviewing the curriculum.

For example, one public secondary school leader noted: “The accreditation process has helped us to identify areas of our curriculum that need strengthening, specifically in language arts and vocational technology…” Other respondents felt the self-study process was instrumental in identifying areas of the curriculum that were weak. One respondent from an independent K-12 school claimed that due to accreditation, the curriculum was “completely revamped and mapped.”

In addition, several school leaders indicated that a systemic, regular evaluation of the curriculum was essential. One respondent commented that it was critical for school staff to allot time to evaluate both curriculum materials and resources for teachers on a regular basis. This respondent noted also that accreditation helped institute changes to address curriculum concerns and develop long-range plans in a procedural and formal manner. Other representative statements follow:

Because my staff and I recognized the value of the ‘process’, we took the opportunity over the two years to seriously reflect on our current curriculum and its implementation. The accreditation process provided both a motivation and a format to evaluate the scope and sequence. To that end, we have been able to identify our weaknesses in the academic program and work towards significant improvement. (Independent Elementary School, Title unspecified, MA)

The accreditation process has impacted the quality of education at our institution by not only identifying areas where improvements could be made, but also by affirming the degree of excellence where it already existed. Curriculum is a domain where systematic assessment is not only crucial but also essential. It is obligatory to set aside time to regularly examine and evaluate the materials, texts and resources available to both students and faculty. The accreditation process helps us to make the necessary changes as well as strategically plan for the future. (Independent Elementary School Principal, MA)
As principal, I frequently refer to the accreditation process as we design curriculum and assessments. The process also assists the district to justify finding funds to support the educational programs for the high school. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

During the self-study it became very apparent that a thorough review of our curriculum needed to be addressed. Our Academic Council (department chairs) are in the process of evaluating methods of on-line curriculum...We see these as a 2-4 year process that will have a large effect on curriculum presentation in the next 10 years. (Independent Middle-High School Principal, RI)

The major impact the NEASC process had was in the area of curriculum revision and development. It also made the school focus on its Mission Statement and make it become a reality. (Public Secondary School Department Coordinator, VT)

The area that was most positively impacted was curriculum articulation. The process of putting the curricula in writing was important and the accreditation process forced it to happen. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Curriculum review and strengthening of teacher evaluation has enhanced rigor and professional improvement of teaching and program (Independent Elementary-Middle School, Title unspecified, ME)

The accreditation process has forced the faculty and staff to examine our school more closely. We have, since the visit updated and expanded our curriculum to give our students a more well rounded, continuous program from year to year. (Independent Elementary School Assistant Principal, MA)

We are now articulating curriculum's needs. It also highlighted the need to complete the arts curriculum. This process helped us to identify the structural deficiencies too. (Public Elementary School Principal, MA)

\<Name of School\>\footnote{Names of schools mentioned in responses have been removed to ensure confidentiality.} has had a strong curriculum, but it was presented in the form of a syllabi. As a result of the accreditation process the curriculum was completely revamped and mapped. It now undergoes annual revisions. (Independent High School Administrative Assistant, RI)
The accreditation process has helped us to identify areas of our curriculum that need strengthening, specifically in language art and vocational technology… (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

### Improved assessment and use of student data

A number of school leaders noted that accreditation resulted in improved assessment. Some respondents also mentioned that the process led to the use of student data to inform instructional practices and assessment methods. A few school leaders, particularly public secondary school leaders, reported that the accreditation process led their schools to formulate a rubric that aided in assessment.

Representative statements follow:

- The accreditation process fostered a school-wide analysis of data and its impact on program decision making. Through looking at testing data as a whole, teachers were able to see how assessment drives instruction. Teacher and administrators were exposed to all content areas of the school and this helped facilitate cross-curricula programming stated in the school improvement plan. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

- The self-study provided an opportunity for our staff to review our curriculum and examine our pedagogical practices. We also reflected on our assessment procedures, which led to our determining that we needed to increase the use of formative assessment to drive instructional practices. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

- We have been forced to align curriculum, look at instructional strategies and how we measure student learning… (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

- We have developed a rubric that has aided us in assessment. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

- Our teachers improved their assessment practices as a result of the NEASC standards. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)
the process has assisted us in the development of rubrics and assessments that are used throughout the various curricular areas in the school. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

The process helps make clear the connections between curriculum, instruction, assessment and curriculum revision. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

**Improved teaching practices**

A number of school leaders reported that participation in accreditation encouraged teachers to consider their classroom teaching behavior and techniques. As a result of participation in accreditation, for instance, teachers became more mindful of how they conducted their lessons and how their teaching techniques affected students’ performance. Of course, not all students have similar learning styles; a student who has difficulty memorizing facts may demonstrate exceptional ability in creative writing. Such a student may also learn better if given the opportunity to do more groupwork. Accreditation standards stress research-supported best practices in classroom teaching, so unsurprisingly, survey respondents indicated that participation in accreditation led to more effective teaching practices employed in classrooms. Representative responses follow:

*The accreditation process has prompted us to examine how we teach and the degree to which we are meeting the needs of all our students. Teachers have been encouraged to try new strategies in the classroom. We have adopted a new writing program and are exploring a new math program.* (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, NH)

*Teachers are now more cognizant of their teaching behavior and their impact on students’ achievement. In addition, the self-study process has prompted better collaboration among teachers regarding instructional practices.* (Public Secondary School Principal, CT)

*<Name of High School>]*42 has spurred teachers and administrators on to make needed improvements in instruction. We have worked hard this spring to complete a CSR grant to provide resources to implement change. (Public Secondary School Principal, ME)

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42Names of schools mentioned in responses were removed to ensure confidentiality.
Teachers viewed the education of the students in terms of the entire school in which their individual classes, while important, were a part of the complete education of the student. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Instructional concerns were addressed due to our self-study. Staff members were given an opportunity to work together to reflect about the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

The accreditation process has made the staff reflective of their practices in and out of the classroom as it concerns teaching and learning. The staff have visited other schools as members of visiting committees and they felt positive, reassured and challenged in the process. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

## Improved school schedule and courses

Some school leaders reported that accreditation prompted improvements to their school’s schedule and the types of courses offered. One respondent mentioned that a contentious issue at his school was that parents felt there was inadequate access to honors and Advanced Placement (AP) level courses; as a result of the self-study, the issue was actively addressed and the school increased access to these courses. Another respondent noted that the quality of education at their school improved because the visiting team recommended that more elective courses be offered. Representative comments follow:

[Accreditation has been] helpful in science where upper level classes had lab periods whereas lower level classes did not. Now ALL [respondent’s emphasis] science classes have lab periods. AP science classes have two lab periods. Rubrics are now used in all curricular areas… (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

We are presently in the process of implementing some of [the visiting team’s] recommendations such as adding more electives to our curriculum. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

One specific example [of how accreditation has impacted the quality of education] for our school was an issue of parent dissatisfaction with access to honors level and AP courses. The self-study forced an objective look at this issue. The result was an increase in the number of honors level and AP courses which allowed for more
student access to these curricula without forcing teachers to lower standards in and for existing courses. (Anonymous respondent, CT)

We have re-evaluated some courses and made changes and additions. (Independent High School Principal, MA)

[Accreditation] insures focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment…Improved instructional practices. More electives created. Alternative scheduling project planned…A new math curriculum will be piloted in 2005-06. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

Heterogeneous classes

Respondents, and especially those representing public secondary schools, reported that their schools; instruction improved upon following through with visiting committee recommendations to change from a tracking system to heterogeneous grouping. Research studies indicate that heterogeneous classes and the elimination of tracking in certain courses improve the academic achievement of all students in comparison to those tracked. Representative responses follow:

One example [of how accreditation has impacted the quality of education] is that all our high school classes will be heterogeneous by 2006. Where we have done heterogeneous grouping our student performance has risen among our traditionally lower performing students. (Public Secondary School, Title Unspecified, VT)

The process stimulated conversation that engenders positive change. The recommendations we followed, such as heterogeneous grouping and examination of class size, have impacted the quality of education. The use of facilities noted in our report made us more aware of how we could serve students. (Public Secondary School Academic Dean of Students, NH)

Public secondary school leaders citing heterogeneous grouping more than independent secondary school leaders was not surprising given that independent schools, often with fewer students in a class at the secondary level, have less need to consider tracked classes. Additionally, many such schools are self-selecting and are able to enroll top students so that the proportion of students performing below grade level is less than the proportion of below-grade-level students at public secondary schools.
Rank 2: Enabled school to identify strengths and weaknesses

As shown by Category 2 of Table 18, 39% of K-12 respondents reported that accreditation enabled their schools to identify strengths and weaknesses. This response ranked second out of the 14 most frequently cited responses to Question 1. However, for public elementary and middle schools as well as independent K-12 schools, this response ranked first as 60% of public elementary and middle school respondents and 55% of independent K-12 school respondents reported that participation in accreditation helped their school to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Many school leaders commented that the process of conducting the self-study and using Standards as a “self-assessment tool” was the stimulus that enabled their school to identify strengths and areas of need. This subsequently prompted immediate efforts to address the school’s identified weaknesses.

After all, many schools are fragmented by department which can make comprehensive school-wide change difficult. The self-study process, which involves the entire school staff as they undertake a thorough self-evaluation, provides an impetus to actively institute changes where deemed necessary.

School leaders commonly reported that the self-study was the one component of the accreditation process that had the greatest impact on the quality of education at their school; they claimed that through the process of self-study, their school was able to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their strengths and weaknesses. Some school leaders noted that the strength of the accreditation process was that it provided the school with a focus which, according to one respondent, “fostered a positive school culture.” Other respondents also commented that the process forced the staff to think critically and constructively. A few respondents stated that the process provided validation of good practices already in place at their school. Representative statements follow:

*Standards helped identify areas of need. Dialogue about strengths and weaknesses led to real action taken to address those areas. Recommendations provide guidelines, structure.* (Anonymous Respondent)

*The process allows us to focus on issues we want to focus on, issues that we think will improve the quality of education. We use the process to forward our own agenda.* (Independent High School Assistant Head of School, MA)
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

[Accreditation] has focused on awareness of needed educational goals for our school community. (Public Secondary School Principal, VT)

Participation in [the] accreditation process validated [the] quality of education at our institution. We strongly felt we provided an excellent education, and we were affirmed. It impacted shared knowledge of the curriculum among faculty members. (Independent Middle-High School Headmaster, MA)

The process affirmed what we are doing at the school. It validated the efforts of the faculty and staff in the day to day ministry of education. The process challenges the community to set realistic goals for improvement in the academics of the institution… (Independent High School Principal, MA)

This is only my second year at this school. During my first year we prepared our self study and in the beginning of my second year we had our visit. Already the preparation and the visit helped to create changes that were needed. I'm sure the impact will continue. (Public Elementary School Principal, NH)

[Accreditation] provided a firm foundation and needed self knowledge to prepare our school for a new model of education. (Independent High School President, MA)

[Accreditation] has greatly influenced the quality of education in a positive way. We spent a great deal of time studying our school in comparison to the standards and from that study realized that we are doing pretty well. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

[Accreditation] has required us to take a look at what we do and how we do it in comparison to a base-line standard. (Anonymous respondent)

As a first step the process has allowed us to take a snapshot of where we currently are and where we want to be. What do students know and can do? We have swiftly enhanced our capital improvement plan, led faculty/student conversations re: facility issue and retained a coach for professional development. (Public Secondary School Principal, ME)

Participation in this process allowed the entire school to take a hard look at what we do and why we do it. (Public Elementary School Principal, NH)
[Accreditation] has focused our school to plan better and to be internally aware of our strengths and weaknesses. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

The process of the self-study was a very valuable experience. Teacher and all staff worked closely to investigate their own teaching, curriculum and student achievement and records. It opens up doors of communication and the understanding of what has been done and what needs to be done. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

[Accreditation] has provided the needed reflection in key areas of school improvement. Examples would be the upgrading of curriculum and the improvement of instruction. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

The accreditation process greatly impacted the quality of education at my school. When we had to compare our efforts to the accreditation standards, we had to really look at what we were doing… (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

I feel the quality of education of our school was high quality but there is always room for improvement. The accreditation process made everyone take a hard look at what we were teaching and what we were all about. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

In a lot of ways, the team affirmed what we are doing well and guided us on making improvements. One of the team's recommendations was the formation of a school board. We have met and now see what an integral part of the school, a board can be. It also pointed out to us the need of manipulatives in our Math program… (Independent Elementary-Middle School, Title unspecified, MA)

[The accreditation process] allowed us an excellent forum in which to meet many of our goals educationally while presenting us with the questions and challenges needed to reflect if we were doing something or not i.e.- how do you accurately assess students' learning (revision of our student portfolio) - how do you communicate progress to parents (revision of your progress reports). (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

We have, I think, become more intentional, more focused and more critical (in a good sense) about how and why we do the things we do.
The process forces us to think critically, creatively, and collaboratively about what we do and how we do it and how we could do it better.

(Independent High School Headmaster, MA)

Rank 3—Improved organizational effectiveness and long-range planning

As Category 3 of Table 18 shows, 35% of school leaders reported that participation in the accreditation process improved organizational effectiveness and long-range planning at their school. This response was ranked third out of the 14 most frequently cited responses to Question 1, though there was some variation by Commission: Category 3 ranked higher for independent K-12 school leaders (48% reporting) and public secondary school leaders (32% reporting) and ranked less high for public elementary and middle school leaders (26% reporting) and technical and career school leaders (8% reporting).

In general, respondents reported that the accreditation process improved their school’s organizational effectiveness because: (1) it strengthened the staff’s commitment to the mission of the school and/or prompted a focus on long-term expectations; (2) the recommendations of the visiting team helped the school with decision-making, and (3) it improved the mission statement or helped with the formulation of a new mission statement.

Organizational effectiveness is a factor that can profoundly affect teaching and learning in several ways. It is not surprising that respondents reported that accreditation impacted organizational effectiveness given that the Standards for Accreditation require that schools have procedures in place for long-term planning and budgeting. Planning and budgeting are often complex and challenging jobs for school administrators. For example, well-developed plans that outline what ought to happen at times when school finances are unpredictable can offset negative impacts on school resources or instruction in the event a district is faced with unexpected cuts to the school budget. Some districts face teacher turnovers as large numbers of staff retire while others contend with unpredicted space shortages as enrollments increase each year.

Respondents indicated that visiting teams’ recommendations are often used to guide organizational change. Some mentioned that due to visiting team suggestions, they were better able to prioritize long-term objectives. Others held that the process gave them the impetus to thoroughly analyze administrative structures and practices.
Comments about organization and planning sometimes mentioned schools’ mission statements. A few respondents claimed that the accreditation process prompted a heightened focus on the mission when planning or making decisions.

A few respondents noted that the accreditation process resulted in an improved mission statement while others commented that it helped with the formulation of a new mission statement. Representative statements follow:

*All staff members and students have been more focused on our mission. As a result, we have been able to teach to standards and encourage students to learn at a higher level.* (Public Middle School Principal, CT)

*[Accreditation]…has made everyone more conscious and intentional… about our curriculum, our professionalism, our ongoing development, and our commitment to our mission.* (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, CT)

*We will be rolling out mission-based expectations and rubrics next year, and initiating a long-term commitment to staff recommendations, student works.* (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

*The mission statement serves to drive the school in a direction that is positive and educationally sound.* (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

*[Accreditation] did provide the motivation for an in depth evaluation of our administrative procedures, curriculum, and to clarify our long range goals. We recognized the need to update some classrooms texts, and introduce technology to the classrooms. It also was an opportunity to devise a better plan for use of our library.* (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

*After both visits we re-examined/began our strategic plan. Our plans have been guided by recommendations made by the team. Our school has definitely benefited and improved.* (Independent Elementary School, Title unspecified, RI)

*[Accreditation] has forced each department to review the program of study for its students. It has also allowed for us to review the administrative structure of the school to ensure it meets the needs of students, faculty and parents.* (Independent PreK-12 School Head of School, MA)
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

[Accreditation] impacted decision making in virtually all issues—facility to curriculum. Budgetary planning impact. Programmatic changes. (Technical and Career School Superintendent, MA)

Improved Mission Statement with the school wide rubrics has provided an improved focus for the faculty. There is improved communication between departments and individuals. (Public Secondary School Principal, CT)

**Rank 4—Led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality**

The fourth most frequently cited response to Question 1 was that accreditation led to greater staff teamwork and promoted collegiality, reported by 21% of respondents, as Category 4 of Table 18 shows. School leaders claimed that accreditation fostered teamwork and collegiality because it:

- Stimulated dialogue and increased inter-grade and inter-department communication
- Fostered staff unity, reduced feelings of isolation and fragmentation
- Promoted collaboration, led to the development of ‘staff work teams’ and led to more collective problem-solving

The breakdown for each is as follows:

- **Stimulated dialogue and increased inter-grade and inter-department communication.**

  Several respondents claimed that participation in accreditation encouraged dialogue among staff and increased inter-grade and inter-department communication. These responses were unsurprising given that each Commission’s Standards require that schools make time available for teaching staff to meet regularly and engage in ongoing dialogue about students and lessons. Representative statements included:
The process of the self-study was a very valuable experience. Teacher and all staff worked closely to investigate their own teaching, curriculum and student achievement and records. It opens up doors of communication and the understanding of what has been done and what needs to be done.  (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

The accreditation process has an impact on improving areas across grade level communication. It also enhances and supports the professionalism of the faculty and staff. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

The accreditation process and the recommendations from the team have given us impetus that was needed from to provide inter-grade level communication within our school… (Public Elementary School Principal, MA)

A critical review and analysis was of benefit to all….All staff became more aware of what happens in other grade levels than their own. (Public Elementary School Principal, MA)

We found the self-assessment process to be extremely beneficial. Until we actually sat down and started to have a dialogue about our strengths and weaknesses, did we become aware of the true make-up of our school environment. For example, when primary teachers and intermediate teachers shared all that was going on in their classrooms, we became aware then of the quality instruction taking place in our school. (Public Elementary School Principal, MA)

The area of most impact that the accreditation process has had on our institution is the ongoing focus, related discussion and activities related to a positive school culture for our students and staff. (Technical and Career School Director, VT)

We did a good deal of work on accreditation in terms of scope and sequence of the various disciplines. It did begin a dialogue with the lower grade teachers and the middle school teachers which I hope will continue. (Independent Elementary-Middle School, Title unspecified, MA)

The teachers learned to work as a team and enhanced internal communications (teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-principal) and ensured their standards were current.
Fostered staff unity and reduced feelings of isolation of fragmentation

Some school leaders stated that the accreditation process reduced feelings of isolation or fragmentation between departments or grade levels, thereby unifying the staff. Some respondents also felt that through increased teamwork and communication, there was more emphasis on collective problem-solving. Respondents observed that the process essentially put the staff “on the same page” leading them to view isolated, individual issues now as collective ones. For instance, one public middle school leader said that being at a large school, staff often felt “fragmented”; however, the accreditation process fostered staff cohesion. Representative responses follow:

The recommendations helped the staff to focus on the areas of greatest need. It gave the staff common language and a view into the needs of their individual programs and the other programs in the school. (Technical and Career School Director, MA)

Being a large (1,100 student) school, we were often fragmented in our improvement efforts. Accreditation has been a unifying factor and this has translated into greater consistency: for academic and behavioral expectations; achievement standards; professional development foci. (Public Middle School Principal, NH)

[Accreditation] improved collaboration of faculty and staff to focus on school mission, renewed focus on quality issues relating to instruction and student learning. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

[Accreditation] brought our staff together to examine all areas of our school operation, weighing strengths and identifying areas of concern…Enabled us to generate open dialogue and concerns and to brainstorm ways to problem solve…Has helped teachers focus on instruction, curriculum implementation and assessment. The self-study and the team’s final report has/is being used to capitalize on the positives and to improve the areas of need. (Public Middle School Principal, CT)

I think the standards help to focus our work and get everyone on board. We look at everything and deal with issues that should be dealt with! (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)
The process focuses the staff. It causes us all to participate in the analyzing of our work and to work collaboratively toward solving our problems in order to reach our goals. It causes focus on the School Improvement Plan aimed at student achievement. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Promoted collaboration, led to the development of staff work teams and led to more collective problem-solving

Some respondents stated that the self-study process created an opportunity for school staff to engage more regularly in discussions about school-related issues and to work constructively in teams. Several school leaders believed that accreditation fostered greater collaboration among teachers in lesson-planning. School leaders also remarked that the process led to more teacher discussion of instructional techniques. This was cited more frequently by public secondary school leaders who noted that the accreditation process led to the establishment of ‘Professional Learning Communities’ (PLCs) at their school and prompted teachers to discuss best practices and see if their own teaching methods aligned with these. Others reported that the process encouraged teachers to think about their lessons only as part of their students’ entire education, beyond what occurred in the confines of their own classroom. Representative responses included:

Through the accreditation process I have been able to get staff to work together in Professional Learning Communities (4) to look at Best Practices. Staff (80%) look at strategies from these Best Practices and implement them into their lessons. After two weeks the PLC (4) meet to discuss successes. For next school year 100 % of the staff will be in a PLC. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

Staff work teams have set a precedent for future operations and initiatives. (Public Secondary School Assistant Superintendent, CT)

We have developed more teams and become more collegial. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

So far the greatest impact has been the fostering of more communication amongst staff… (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

More collaboration of staff generated (due to the accreditation process). Interdisciplinary approaches increased and planned… (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)
Participation in the accreditation process made the staff come together and discuss who we are and what we want to become both for our professional improvement and for the benefit of our students. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

High staff generally enjoy working in their own context area. This process helped our staff to work collaboratively and constructively in developing our self study. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

We have developed more teams and become more collegial. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Teachers meet monthly in ‘learning communities’ which have focused on End of Course (expectations) and the essence of what we want to ensure every student learns in our school.” (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Teachers viewed the education of the students in terms of the entire school in which their individual classes while important were a part of the complete education of the student. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Rank 5—Improved school resources

Overall, 14% of school leaders reported that participation in the accreditation process led to improvements in the quality of their school’s resources, as shown by Category 5 of Table 18.

Of course, schools differ enormously regarding the quantity and quality of instructional resources. Some students attend schools with modern facilities that are clean, spacious, and comfortable. Other students attend schools that are in desperate need of building repairs and renovations, have insufficient heating or lighting, poor ventilation and lack adequate computers access or sufficient classroom space. They may sit in classes with broken desks or classrooms located in basements without windows. They may attend schools that lack auditoriums or do not offer students after-school access to computers.

Many school leaders who reported that accreditation improved school resources specifically mentioned that improvements were made to the
school building, or ‘physical plant’. For example, these respondents often noted that having an objective body come to their school and make recommendations to renovate or add classrooms convinced decision-makers to allocate necessary funds to support needed building improvements. In particular, public school respondents frequently commented that having a NEASC visiting team recommend changes to the school building justified schools’ requests for funding to support changes.

The visit caused each of the following to happen within 1 year: wrote a technology plan and got a grant to cover 3 year installation cycles. We hired a part-time Learning Strategist who assisted all classroom teachers on behalf of the students. This new position allowed the person who did it for all, to take on upper grade curriculum development and supervision. We also implemented an Acceptable Use Policy. (Independent Elementary School Head, ME)

Our physical plant was improved in part because of NEASC standards backing. Some staffing decisions were also made as a result. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, NH)

Some recommendations will help my institution with requests at higher level. Machinery that was needed will now be provided. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

A greater emphasis was placed on the physical plant. The self-study helped staff members critically look at our school… (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

Rank 6—Improved professional development

As shown by Category 6 of Table 18, the sixth most frequently cited response to Question 1 was that participation in accreditation improved professional development, reported by 10% of respondents.

Representative statements included:

[Accreditation] has stressed evaluation and professional development and added support for our efforts in more areas. (Independent K-12 School Head, ME)

Professional development activities are based on a re-written mission statement. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)
**Rank 7—Made school accountable**

Overall, 9% of school leaders reported that accreditation provided effective school accountability, as shown by Category 7 of Table 18. Respondents claimed that the accreditation process upholds school accountability primarily through standards, systematic assessment, focus on ongoing improvement and peer evaluation. Some respondents stated that such a system of accountability also provides assurance to the community of the quality of education offered at their school. According to one public secondary school leader:

*The accreditation process provides an opportunity to hold an institution up to the litmus test of ‘best practices.’ I’d like to think that the district and building leadership plans for growth and improvement without the impetus of NEASC but it’s always helpful to have the support of an outside agency when advocating for the resources and means for change and improvement. When someone in-house overlooks, or does not notice the implications of, an area needing improvement, the NEASC process is extremely effective in helping us focus and develop the means for improvement.* (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, CT)

**Rank 8—Exposed school to new learning trends and innovations**

Overall, 9% of school leaders reported that participation in accreditation provided their schools with exposure to new learning trends and innovations, as shown by Category 8 of Table 18. Worth mention is that independent K-12 and technical and career school leaders reported ‘exposure to new instructional practices and innovations’ almost twice as often as public elementary, middle and secondary school leaders did—13% of independent K-12 and 11% of technical and career school leaders compared with 6% of public secondary school leaders and 4% of public elementary and middle school leaders cited exposure to new instructional practices and innovations.

A few respondents remarked that participation in accreditation allows their school to remain ‘current’ or aware of innovative practices because visiting team are often knowledgeable about the various practices employed at different schools since many of them have visited many schools as part of visiting teams. One public secondary school leader claimed that accreditation helped to promote “equality” among schools. Others
indicated that the exchange that is an inherent part of the process enables schools to find out if their curriculum materials, teaching practices, facilities, and resources are outdated.

That a higher proportion of independent K-12 school leaders reported exposure to new instructional practices and innovations was expected for a couple of reasons. First, public schools must comply with certain state board of education requirements making them more interconnected than independent schools that do not have to comply with similar requirements and can govern and set policy autonomously. Secondly, many New England independent schools are located in rural settings at a distance from peer institutions, creating a disconnect with them and limiting educators’ contact with teachers and administrators at other schools. Representative statements follow:

*The process allowed faculty and staff members to delve into programs and analyze them in terms relevant to today’s academics. The visiting team was very impressed with our academic programs. Overall, the comments we received were highly positive. I think the process was a very affirmative one for all faculty and staff.*

(Independent Elementary-Middle School Technology Coordinator, CT)

*Accreditation awakens dormant institutions and brings them back to reality. It exposes the institutions to new learning trends and philosophies and different pedagogical trends and approaches. It gives a system continuity and promotes educational equality among the schools of New England.*

(Public Secondary School Assistant Principal, CT)

**Rank 9—Increased community support for school initiatives**

Altogether, 7% of school leaders reported increased community support for school initiatives as a result of participating in the accreditation process, as shown by Category 9 of Table 18.

Any time a visiting committee visits a school for its evaluation, a report is generated which documents recommendations to the school based on areas that have been identified as needing improvement. This documentation is often used as evidence presented to school boards, public officials, boards of trustees (in the case of independent K-12 schools) or other decision-makers so that the school can garner support for needed funds to institute changes in response to the visiting team’s recommendations. Respondents also stated that participation in accreditation increased community support for school decisions because
the recommendations came from a third party, independent and impartial group. For instance, one respondent reported that their school was put on probation because school facilities were found to not meet accreditation Standards, an action that later propelled the state to provide needed funding to improve the facility and remove the school from probation status. Representative statements follow:

The most important aspect [of the accreditation process] is parent/teacher/community confidence. It has been a big boost to our institution to become accredited. The process and the outcomes all support the wonderful academic product we create. (Public Middle School Principal, NH)

Accreditation can provide ‘clout’ to initiatives that a principal wants to enact but may not be able to effect because he/she does not have the "power" either with the community or staff. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

NEASC put us on probation as a result of no movement in bonding… The state officials moved forward with appropriating the necessary monies under the threat of accreditation. (Technical and Career School Superintendent, MA)

1. Staff had a common goal  
2. The community was attuned to the accreditation status  
3. The community supported the need for renovation and additions to the tune of $13,60000. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

**Rank 10—Increased parental and community involvement**

Five percent of respondents stated that participation in the accreditation process has resulted in more parental and community involvement, as shown by Category 10 of Table 18. The Standards for Accreditation for each Commission place emphasis on parent and community involvement. Schools are encouraged to seek input from the entire school community in their decision-making procedures. Representative statements follow:

[There has been] much higher parent involvement than has been witnessed before [the] Accreditation Visit. Student involvement was at an all time high. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

Several programs have improved as a result of our self-study process and one visiting committee’s recommendations. It is important and useful to include all of the school’s constituencies in the process—
teachers, parents, administrators, students, and trustees. (Independent PreK-12 School Head, MA)

The self-study is extremely important for the school in helping to improve the quality of education for students. Having the entire faculty consider issues with input from students and parents helps to carefully focus on areas to be addressed...
(Anonymous respondent, CT)

[The] process [is] very helpful to a young school with a new head; Improved communication among staff; Included parents, bringing them into the fold; Improved cohesiveness - fac/brd/admin/families; affirmed what we do well; helped us to document areas for improvement; provides structure/timeline for improvement. (Independent PreK-12 School Director, NH)

Rank 11—Raised staff morale

Overall, 5% of school leaders reported that the accreditation process raised staff morale at their school, as shown by Category 11 of Table 18. For instance, one public middle school leader commented that the process, “increased rapport.” Others felt the process encouraged cohesiveness among faculty or gave the staff, as one public middle school principal noted “a sense of ownership in the overall success of the school.” Interestingly, public elementary and middle school leaders reported that staff morale was raised about twice as frequently as the other respondents; whereas 11% of public elementary and middle school leaders cited raised staff morale, only 1% of public secondary school leaders, 6% of technical and career school leaders and 3% of independent K-12 school leaders responded similarly. Representative statements follow:

Increased collaboration and opportunity for reflection has improved rapport among colleagues. In addition, this increased collegiality has fostered an improvement in the risk-taking needed to maintain a collaborative relationship. By having an opportunity to share personal opinions/perspectives staff was given a sense of ownership in overall success of the school—this has improved morale in the building. (Public Middle School Principal, CT)

The teachers feel more connected to other institutions and more empowered. This has helped improve the professional culture at the school. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Assistant Head, NH)
Rank 12—Led to better staffing decisions

Four percent of school leaders cited better staffing decisions in their responses to Question 1, as shown by Category 12 of Table 18. For instance, some school leaders reported that participation in the accreditation process helped clarify leadership roles, such as the roles of the principal and assistant principal. Some noted the process enhanced methods of evaluating faculty and staff and others felt it generated an awareness of staffing needs. Representative statements included:

[Accreditation] has clarified the role of the assistant principal who is now involved in the evaluation of staff. The evaluation of teachers, in theory, should improve the quality of education in the building. (Public Secondary School Assistant Principal, ME)

[Accreditation] has pointed out weaknesses— not enough counselor’s time or nurse’s time - helping me to address that need. It has pointed out faculty needs and helped us make the case for those fund drives… (Independent K-12 School Head, ME)

The main impact is that the reaccreditation process has helped [<Name of School>] to focus on some issues that we have been concerned about. Specifically, the reaccreditation process has helped us to focus more clearly on our technology plan, or philosophy on diversity, and faculty and staff evaluation systems. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, RI)

[We recognized the] need for additional administrative staff and sufficient budget… (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

43Names of schools mentioned in responses were removed to ensure confidentiality.
Rank 13—Resulted in more continuity and consistency

As Category 13 of Table 18 shows, 4% of respondents reported that participation in the accreditation process has resulted in more continuity and consistency. For instance, some respondents commented that the accreditation process has led to “ongoing focus” and some noted that their school has developed greater consistency with regard to their academic programming. Indeed, an aim of accreditation is to foster continuous progress. Although a team evaluation visit occurs at the conclusion of a school’s self-study, the end of the visit sets in motion specific plans for the school’s immediate future and long-term thus enabling continuity with school improvement efforts. The school improvement process thus extends beyond the time of the self-study as schools must prepare two-year and five-year follow-up progress reports in which they describe actions undertaken in response to visiting team recommendations. Representative statements follow:

[The accreditation process] provided greater continuity and accountability. Forced us to look at ourselves against…standards… (Independent High School Superintendent, CT)

The area of most impact that the accreditation process has had on our institution is the ongoing focus, related discussion and activities related to a positive school culture for our students and staff. (Technical and Career School Director, VT)

Rank 14—Provided staff with exposure to peer evaluators

Overall, 1% of school leaders claimed that participation in accreditation has improved the quality of education at their school by providing their staff exposure to peer evaluators, as shown by Category 14 of Table 18. Representative statements included:

The process of opening the school to outside scrutiny is critical. Peer evaluation is at the same time, both challenging and disarming. People want to ‘look their best’ in front of their peers from other institutions. At the same time, they enjoy sharing ideas and insights. (Independent High School Head of School, MA)
We are a standards driven school. Our self-study and report do provide guidance and reinforcement. Peer review is very beneficial. (Public Secondary School Headmaster, MA)

'The accreditation process] allowed us to talk with distinguished educators from other schools. My personal site visits have been a real benefit in terms of ideas. (Independent High School Superintendent, CT)

The recommendations made concerning quality of education are taken quite seriously by staff and school board. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)
School Resources

Past research indicates that the quality of a school’s resources affects learning outcomes for K-12 students. Although the financial resources to support the purchase and upgrade of technology, library and other resources have tremendous bearing on the quantity and quality of a school’s resources, financial resources are not the lone factor affecting the quality of resources. The ways in which resources are made available to teachers and students and the amount and kinds of professional development in technology for staff, impact the effectiveness of these resources.

While there are disagreements among educators about which resources have the greatest impact on student learning, it is generally agreed that today’s K-12 students use more technology and are expected to be more computer- and information-literate by the time they complete high school than ever before. However, not all schools are equally able to provide students with access to technology, library and multimedia resources given disparities in school and community resources across districts. To ensure equal access, schools continue to find innovative ways to prepare students for a knowledge-based, technology-intensive economy. Yet, with so many schools grappling with limited budgets, many districts have found that acquiring and incorporating new technology into every day teaching has become a significant challenge.

At some schools, technological innovations have been eagerly sought and the incorporation of technology in the classroom has been facilitated with relative ease and supported with ongoing staff training and on-site information-technology professionals. This scenario has been more rapid, common and less burdensome in affluent communities than it has in poor ones because wealthy communities may have financial resources to support new technology purchases.

Moreover, the socio-economic makeup of a school community affects the frequency that schools are able to update resources. In wealthy communities, a large proportion of the parent community tends to be computer-skilled and children are more likely to have internet-connected computers at home. These communities are more likely to support increased funding for technology and other resources in schools. In poorer communities, levels of computer literacy are lower among the parent population and children are less likely to have computers at home.

Financial resources are not the only factor affecting the quality of school resources at a school, though insufficient funding to purchase supplies for students is a significant hindrance to obtaining or maintaining resources. A
school that can provide computers and internet access can only make the most of this technology when teachers are trained to use that technology and if access to computers is ensured during and after school hours. As Dr. Eva Kampits, past Chair of the New England Regional Computing Association, commented in a recent interview, “Schools can be computer-rich and learning-poor.” At the same time, a school with relatively average funds will be unable to remain competitive or at par with peer institutions if they do not make technology and library resources a priority. Students in these institutions can be placed at a disadvantage when they graduate and find out that their peers are far more information-literate because they were trained earlier on computers and technology. The fact remains that inequalities in technology, library, multimedia and other resources have produced a perceptible and problematic ‘digital divide’ across school systems.
Key Finding 8:

Three-quarters of respondents from K-12 schools believed that participation in the accreditation process improved the quality of school resources, including technology, multimedia and library resources.

Surveyed school leaders were asked: “How important is the accreditation process in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies, including technology, library and multimedia resources and supplies?”

Answers were coded by placing each response in one of three categories, “Important”, “Neutral”, and “Not Important” as shown by Table 19. Numbers underneath “Important” designate the number of responses by Commission, who answered that the accreditation process improved the quality of school resources at their school. Numbers in the “Neutral” column denote the percentage of respondents who did not explicitly express that accreditation either improved or did not improve the quality of school resources. For instance, a number of respondents who represented schools that were new to the accreditation process (i.e. new NEASC members) commented that it was still too soon for them to know whether or not accreditation has had an impact on resources. Or, sometimes respondents noted that accreditation has had an indirect impact on resources. Also, worth noting is that some reported that resources were not improved because improvements were simply unneeded given that a school had already made resources a priority or had sufficient resources for all its students.

Across the Commissions, most respondents claimed that accreditation was important in terms of improving the quality of school resources. There was variation, though, regarding the specific ways in which resources improved at different schools. For instance, public secondary school leaders commonly report that accreditation led to more efficient use of resources. Most public elementary and middle schools, affected major capital resources like building facilities or upgrades to computer labs.
Table 19: Percentage of respondents reporting that accreditation was important for improving school resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public secondary schools</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public elementary and middle schools</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and career schools</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent K-12 schools</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>11%</strong></td>
<td><strong>14%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on K-12 survey findings, three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicated that the accreditation process was important in terms of improving the quality of school resources, including technology, library and multimedia resources. In general, findings were consistent across the Commissions: 69% of public elementary and middle school leaders, 74% of public secondary school leaders, 89% of technical and career school leaders and 77% of independent K-12 school leaders reported that accreditation was important for improving the quality of school resources at their schools. Those who reported that the accreditation process improved school resources claimed it did so by:

- **Justifying needs to the community**
- **Keeping schools updated and equal with regard to the quality of resources across school districts**
- **Enabling schools to identify needs**
- **Using existing resources more efficiently**
- **Helping schools plan and budget for the short- and long-term**
- **Improving libraries**

Detailed findings follow:

- **Justifying needs to the community**

Respondents reported that school resources improved because visiting team recommendations justified their schools’ requests for needed resources. For example, visiting team reports that emphasized a need for more computers, building space or funds to support professional development in technology were taken seriously since those recommending the changes represented an unbiased, respected and independent body. Thus, this enabled schools to justify needs (relating to resources) to the School Board or community at large.
While respondents from all Commissions reported that accreditation helped justify schools’ needs to the community, this response was most frequently given by public school leaders. This seems rational given that public schools have less internal control over their budgets than independent schools given that tax support is based on property values of the community. Meanwhile, independent schools setting their tuition rate have less reliance on outside public bodies when requesting resources. Representative responses follow:

*The standards are taken seriously by our community and school board and help us justify requests.* (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, NH)

*It [accreditation] is a powerful tool in bringing about an understanding from the budget committee and central office, of the needs in these areas. The recommendations from the Commission hold great clout with the community.* (Public Elementary School Principal, State unspecified)

*It [accreditation] is very important- in fact, it is essential. It helps schools get beyond a local or state perspective, which is often influenced by ‘what we can afford’ to a regional, research-based view that is based on what is good for students and leads to improved student achievement.* (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

*[Accreditation is] very important [for improving school resources]. The voice of an independent group detailing these [resources] needs is incredibly helpful.* (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

*We use the process (and the recommendations) as a true support for financial support in these areas with our school committee and finance committees. Without NEASC we may not have been able to fund these areas.* (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

*I could write volumes on this topic… As a result of the accreditation report, our community is now poised to go forward with a 25 million dollar renovation project focused around teaching, learning and technology. The [Visiting Team] Report gave support to what the community knew to be the reality of the situation.* (Public Secondary School Principal, RI)

*More resources have been provided. A new facility is badly needed but has been voted down six years in a row. A $678,000 bond was passed in March ’05 to do upgrades on the facility.* (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)
[Accreditation] helps provide us with resources and supplies, adds another voice to help teachers and administrators demonstrate that we do need quality resources and supplies and it is money well spent. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

The validation of our policies and practices is not only reflective, but necessary for future growth. (Public Secondary School Assistant Superintendent, CT)

I believe [accreditation is] very important [for improving school resources]. This information will be explained to the School Board and parent groups. The recommendations support the high school goals and will support our needs for increased funding. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

[Accreditation] gives us clout in requesting these resources from the school board and community. It helps us to focus on specific needs. (Public Secondary School Principal, ME)

The accreditation process has given us leverage with the town council in our requests to adequately fund the school resources. Unfortunately, we still are having a difficult time getting the funding we really need. (Public Secondary School Principal, CT)

[Accreditation is] very important [for improving school resources]; we always [pass] several requests that are approved due to the accreditation [process]. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

When things are significantly poor- very old building, etc., NEASC adds emphasis on the need for change. If resources are adequate or slightly less so, NEASC has much less of an impact. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Our resources were one of our commendations. Many schools would languish without NEASC decided items. (Public Secondary School Vice Principal, MA)

Extremely. NEASC accreditation is the most significant tool available to schools to help leverage more $ [respondent’s emphasis]. (Public Secondary School, Title unspecified, NH)

The accreditation process afforded another set of lens to substantiate our needs. As a result, our district views our needs differently and not personal. (Public Elementary School, Title unspecified, CT)
When the visiting team validates needs already identified by the school, this adds a great deal of strength to request for needed school resources. (Public Elementary School, Principal, CT)

Very important - I feel our school benefited in all of these areas as a request of the self-study and site visit. (Public Middle School Principal, CT)

Very important, as it can verify and substantiate our stated needs. (Technical and Career School Superintendent, MA)

The real thing that helps in this area is the monetary resources available...NEASC helps us gain credibility and may help us nationalize tuition increases to support needed supplies etc. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Head of School, NH)

Accreditation reinforced already acknowledged and identified resource needs; added justification for planning and initiation for capital fund raising for facilities; receipt of technology gifts. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Assistant Principal, ME)

Keeping schools updated and equal with regard to the quality of resources across school systems

Some respondents, in answering Question 2, reported that participation in the accreditation process enabled their schools to keep up-to-date with modern times regarding school resources. Ten years ago, schools with a computer lab and a sufficient number of computers for every student were considered sufficiently updated with their computer resources. Today, schools are expected to have computers with high-speed internet access for all students, and tomorrow, who knows?

It is critical for schools to stay abreast of latest innovations if they are to educate students in an increasingly technology-driven society. Technological innovations are increasingly adopted into mainstream society
and the importance of keeping students and schools updated with resources is essential if students are to develop skills that society expects them to have and if they are to be at par with students from other schools.

As outside and independent bodies, visiting teams bring information to schools about what is happening outside the district, if norms have changed, what expectations are at peer institutions, thus acting as a bridge among school systems. Respondents claimed accreditation compels them to upgrade resources, including textbooks, science labs, language labs, and technology and library/multimedia supplies. Respondents stated, for example:

"[Accreditation] is very important because it keeps the system in check in regard to modern times and new technology. Being that we live in such technological times it is important for the schools to be at par with all systems." (Public Secondary School Assistant Principal, CT)

"I think accreditation process or not it is important to improve the quality of your resources if you want to stay competitive with the public school system." (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

"The process made us aware of our strengths and weaknesses in these areas (resources); this enabled us to use this information to make the needed improvements. Some examples are: new math and science texts, remodeling of science lab, inventory and updating of science supplies, etc. These are important because the world is moving at such a fast pace that we must constantly upgrade teaching methods to keep current with our students' world." (Independent Elementary School Principal, MA)

"The accreditation process has expedited the updating of outdated textbooks. Due to limited resources, we are updating resources and supplies one subject at a time." (Independent Elementary School Principal, MA)

"We know we need to work on our library. We are in the process of updating our materials. Our computer lab recently received ten new computers." (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

"[Accreditation is] very [important for improving school resources]. It strengthens our plea with the central office for improvement of our physical plant as well as the need for updating equipment and improved resources." (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)
The accreditation process allows for us to update resources and supplies.  (Technical and Career School Superintendent, CT)

[Accreditation] helps [us] to keep up-to-date and in line with needs of school population.  (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

1. Enabling schools to identify needs

Respondents from all K-12 Commissions observed the impact of accreditation on identifying needs regarding resources. Some respondents indicated that the process helped focus on top priorities in terms of needed resources. Others stated that they used the Standards and recommendations in the visiting team report to determine if resources were inadequate. Some believed the process “moved the school forward in dealing with weaknesses,” as one respondent commented. Other representative statements included:

The accreditation process was like a flashlight in the dark. It reflects our needs/desires and efforts. It showed us the direction we should be traveling toward. We had to take a second look at what we were doing and our strategies and practices to assess our school performance goals.  (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

The accreditation process identified weaknesses in school resources that were obvious and being dealt with. The accreditation process did, however, move us forward more quickly in dealing with these weaknesses.  (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

Because of the accreditation process, we did become more aware of what was lacking in terms of school resources, technology, and supplies. When funding is made available, we are better able to allocate funds to where we have the greatest need, due in part to that accreditation process.  (Public Elementary School, Title unspecified, MA)

[Accreditation] did help us to highlight some changes that were needed (i.e. library).  (Public Elementary School Principal, NH)

The importance lies in the identification of strengths and weaknesses. This creates a resource when the budget process identifies those areas of need that will affect student achievement.  (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)
NEASC forces Central Office to upgrade/repair shortcomings in a school’s improvement plan. Because of NEASC, we received a state-of-the-art media center (issue is lack of square footage given overall enrollments). (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

I think this [the impact of accreditation on school resources] is not as significant as the four learning standards. However, we needed a new building and being on warning was a wake up call to the community. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

Although we have a very strong library with adequate media and technology resources at [<Name of School>] the accreditation process was a strong reminder of how fortunate we are as a school system to have all that we have. In addition, it allowed us to identify areas where we still need to grow so that all students have equal access. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

The reaccreditation process will be very helpful to [<Name of School>] in improving our technology resources. The recommendations of the Visiting Committee are most consistent with our Development Plan regarding residential and instructional facilities needed. These recommendations will be helpful as we speak to our constituents about our facility needs. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, RI)

I believe it [accreditation] can be a powerful tool in garnering resources to support effective programs and identify what needs to happen to ‘grow’ these successes. (Public Secondary School Principal, RI)

[Accreditation] can be helpful in that we might bring to our consciousness something we had overlooked but actually the importance is very slight- and should be very slight if we are doing the job we should be doing, that is, constantly looking at and analyzing our needs and progress. (Independent High School Head of School, MA)

The accreditation process was another tool that helped identify specific areas of need within the school and aided allocation on re-allocating of funds. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

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44 Names of schools mentioned in responses were removed to ensure confidentiality.
45 See 44
The process is important since it demands that we self-evaluate and determine areas that need improvement. (Independent High School President, MA)

Participation in the process helped us to focus on the school’s strengths and weaknesses and identify short and long term goals required to meet the standards. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

Using existing resources more efficiently

The Standards for Accreditation for all of the NEASC Commissions stress that schools have adequate resources to support their academic programs. Although this standard alone cannot eliminate disparities that arise when districts vary in funding levels, the process of peer evaluation, respondents claim, assists schools with using existing resources more efficiently. For instance, not all schools have internet-connected computers thereby limiting such use. Computers may only be in one single room that when used by a classroom prevents computer access to other classes at the same time. Some schools have addressed this issue by using mobile carts to easily transport computers or laptops rather than station only desktop computers in a single computer site. Or, for example, in schools where funding to send teachers to professional development seminars is limited, schools can send one teacher who conducts a lesson for other teachers in which they share what they have learned.

The peer evaluation process facilitates dialogue and information exchange among educators from different school districts. This means that schools benefit from learning from each other including learning about effective use of scarce resources. Indeed, a visiting team’s report to a school will often include suggestions for addressing issues that are often based on the experience of another peer educator.

Several survey respondents reported that participation in accreditation led their schools to use resources in a more efficient or imaginative way. For instance, one respondent wrote that despite having scarce resources, school staff was able to use what was available to them more creatively. Other respondents reported that the process led the school staff to gain awareness of the extent of school resources available to them. Representative statements follow:

We are a school without many resources. However, we use what we have in a wise, sometimes creative manner. We have been able to do more than what we thought possible. The guidance from the report and our own self-study has pushed us to become more creative with our resources. (Independent High School Headmaster, RI)

During the previous accreditation process (10 yrs ago) it was pointed out that certain resources could be put to better use and that if funds become available, technology in the classroom needed to be installed and/or upgraded. There is NO [respondent’s emphasis] question that when a NEASC evaluation team makes a statement - it has long ranging implications for a school - There is positive pressure to do things well and consistently for the student body. (Independent Middle School Principal, RI)

The supplies, including technology, library and media are sufficient. However, by going through the Accreditation Process, teachers became aware of all we do have available. (sic) (Independent Elementary School Head, MA)

This [accreditation] was very valuable because it exposed to the staff how many resources we already had. It showed a few needed resources but mostly (how to) utilize our resource more efficiently. (Public Elementary School Principal, CT)

Helping schools plan and budget for the short- and long-term

Respondents claimed that participation in the accreditation process improved the quality of school resources by emphasizing that schools plan in the longer-term. Respondents from both public and independent K-12 schools reported that participation in accreditation helped them forecast technology and other needs and accordingly, this was accounted for in the budgeting process. Moreover, some indicated that they were able to allocate funds more strategically. Standards require that schools have a written technology plan. This requirement, some claimed forced their schools to more intently focus on short-and long-range needs and, subsequently make concrete plans.

Some respondents suggested that the impact of accreditation on resources occurred indirectly in that the process prompted planning which, in turn, improved resources because appropriate plans were devised. For instance, one respondents noted that the accreditation process provided, in a sense, a “roadmap” for technology-planning. Other comments included:

Fortunately, our school is blessed with many of the resources necessary to ensure quality instruction. I can assume that this process would certainly help to articulate the areas in need of resource improvement. A following strategic plan provides a valuable road-map/plan for improving necessary resources. (Independent High School Head, MA)

The accreditation process had a particularly positive impact on our technology planning and acquisition of technology resources.
Because we had to write a technology plan, we spent enough time as a faculty evaluating technology needs to move forward in this area. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Manager, ME)

The process has been very helpful in the overall improvement in accessing school resources and supplies. This has been especially true of the budget increases I have been able to establish in my library budget. (Public Secondary School Principal, CT)

The accreditation process enforces where budget items need to be spent. New technology, repairs to buildings and other supplies. (Public Secondary School, Title Unspecified, MA)

We used self study to bolster our technology in this next budget. We will continue to reference the self study and visiting team report to push for more technology. (Public Secondary School Position left blank, VT)

The benefit of the accreditation process are more indirect in the area of improving school resources. Most improvement in this area has come about as a result of the long-term planning encouraged by the NEASC evaluations [sic]. (Independent Middle-High School Head of School, MA)

The requirement for a five year strategic plan requires that the school analyze all aspects of the above programs and plan for concrete improvement. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

In general we have allocated resources, as far as we are able, to these areas. However, the ongoing accreditation will compel us to keep these as priorities. Maintaining technology continues to be a challenge. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, NH)

Some respondents wrote that the process led the entire school community to think more holistically about what the school needed. The process was seen to align the needs of various constituencies and put everyone “on the same page” as one school leader noted. Representative statements follow:
[The accreditation process] allows staff and administration to prioritize needs based on objective criteria. (Technical and Career School Superintendent, MA)

[Accreditation] is important [for improving school resources] - Forces staff and Trustees to try and get on the same page. (Independent High School Head of School, NH)

We have made great progress in the area of technology, and we will continue to improve in this area with our technology plan. We hope to improve our Media Center and how it can support the curriculum. (Independent High School Headmaster, MA)

The accreditation process is important by helping the whole school community to prioritize the school resource needs. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

Provides justification in establishing priorities… (Technical and Career School Director, MA)

The process is important as it targets specific needs; budgetary concerns should be better addressed in relation to recommendations. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

**Improving libraries**

Just as the internet has transformed learning in profound ways, libraries have evolved from study centers and book collections into multimedia centers offering students access to computers with several research databases, high-speed internet access and online catalogs. Over time, school administrators can easily lose sight of changes occurring in technology that directly affect young learners. In certain communities, parents and school staff push for additional funding to update library multimedia centers and technology equipment like computers, to ensure that their children will be information literate. Yet, in other districts, that push is not always felt either because there are too many other priorities or, more often, because there is simply not enough funding.

Again, I can point to the findings on the evaluation to support and gain funding in these areas [school resources]… This process actually was the reason that the position of librarian was not cut from the budget. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)
Supplies- major impact on purchasing texts. Technology- new updated labs. Library- collection, reorganization and on-line services - addressing librarian status is a focal point. Multimedia supplies- Grants have been won to improve in this area, a factor from accreditation process. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

A new facility will improve technology library and multimedia equipment. (Public Secondary School Principal, NH)

Extended library hours after school- Monday through Thursday until 4pm. Capital improvement monies focus on technology- new computers for one lab, upgrading of labs. (Public Secondary School Principal, MA)

The focus on our library/media center was greatly impacted. As a result, the new library Media Center meets the needs of our school. The focus on technology during the process resulted in changes e.g., more computers for students, updated computer labs, access in the classroom. (Public Secondary School Teacher, MA)

The accreditation process has helped our staff realize how important it is to have school resources (library, technology, multimedia supplies…) available to support the educational process and bolster instruction…. (Public Middle School Principal, CT)

If a good team is present their recommendations will support the findings of a good self study. In our case this was true and it enabled us to have an objective opinion on the library area. The school requests NEASC and takes seriously their recommendations. (Independent High School Principal, CT)

This was one area I felt was a benefit to our school (library) because of the accreditation process the need for a library is now becoming a reality. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)

Accreditation was the catalyst for a complete renovation of our library, and an assessment of our computer lab and classroom computers. (Independent Elementary-Middle School Principal, MA)
International Schools:
Results, Quantitative Section
International Schools

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges has been serving international schools worldwide since the 1960s. At that time, the U.S. Department of State requested that accrediting agencies include international schools in the accreditation process in order to assure Americans working abroad (e.g. diplomats, ambassadors, military personnel, consulate employees) that their children would receive the same level and quality of education as their peers in the U.S.47 As a result, NEASC established the Committee on American/International Schools Abroad which formally became NEASC’s sixth Commission in 2004 and named the Commission on American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA). Serving international schools for nearly forty years, CAISA’s membership has grown rapidly in recent years, now including more than 130 international schools in Asia, Africa, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America.

In an effort to examine how accreditation impacts the quality of education at international schools, NEASC conducted a pilot survey of those schools that had undergone a self-study and team evaluation visit since 2000. One objective was to see whether or not international school findings parallel findings from the K-12 survey sent to school leaders based in New England (NE). The international school survey was administered in the same way as the K-12 survey.48 (To see the full survey, refer to Appendix A.3.)

Although the methodology employed for the K-12 survey and the international school survey was the same, results for these two groups were analyzed separately since overseas schools have distinctive characteristics that set them apart from NE-based K-12 schools. For instance, a distinguishing characteristic of international school students is that they co-exist in both an American and host-country environment; thus, international school students commonly adopt norms that are simultaneously influenced by both American culture and another culture. In countries where English is not the official language, students may choose to learn in two languages in an effort to acclimatize to their surrounding cultural-linguistic environment. Students of international schools represent many nationalities and are often seen as ‘global citizens,’ forming what has been termed a ‘third culture.’ Not all students take

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48The survey sent to international school leaders was identical to that sent to NE-based K-12 school leaders except with wording changed in a few questions to be more appropriate for international schools.
identical college entrance examinations, like the SATs, for admission to a U.S. college or university. Many European students, for instance, typically take examinations like the International Baccalaureate or English A-Levels. International schools preparing students for college/university entry thus have to offer several examinations and determine how to effectively teach a curriculum that can prepare a multinational class for admission to colleges and universities in different nations. International schools also experience a high level of student transfer since professions often require regular relocation as is the case with Foreign Service and international business.

International schools ordinarily have higher rates of leadership turnover relative to K-12 schools in the U.S. School heads often transfer to a school in a different country every few years. In many ways, international school leaders carry quite different job descriptions from their counterparts in the U.S. They are typically expected to take on a variety of roles beyond that of school administration to include being a community leader, spokesperson for the expatriate community, advisor and unofficial ambassador.

Although role-juggling is a vested responsibility of most international school leaders regardless of school location, no two countries provide similar contexts for international school leaders. Thus, greater environmental differences exist among international schools than they do among American K-12 schools. Given these distinct characteristics of international schools and the unique responsibilities of their school leaders, international school survey results were examined separate from the K-12 survey results as combining results for these two groups might have affected the data and overall results inappropriately.

As with the K-12 schools based in New England, international schools selected for the survey were only those that had team evaluation visits within the last three years (from academic year 2002-2003 to 2004-2005). As stated earlier, the respondent pool was limited to schools that had recent evaluations so that responding school heads would be able to recall their school’s experience through their last self-study and accreditation visit. Moreover, there was a greater probability that respondents held the same position at their school during the preceding accreditation visit. Furthermore, since each Commission regularly revises their Standards for Accreditation, responses from recently visited schools would reflect feedback based on current accreditation Standards and practices.
Fifty international schools had team evaluation visits between 2002 and 2005.\textsuperscript{49} Eighteen school leaders returned completed surveys giving a response rate of 36%. As predicted, the response rate for the international school survey was lower than the response rate for the other K-12 Commissions because of the greater difficulty in sending the survey overseas given unreliable and slow postal or communications systems in some respondents’ countries. Thus, most surveys were e-mailed or faxed to school leaders at overseas schools. The recognized drawback to the proceeding results is the small number of respondents in this category which reduces the capacity to generalize the findings.\textsuperscript{50} Although they only represent the views of 18 overseas school leaders in this initial pilot survey, the written comments shed light on the most valued aspects of the accreditation process based on the opinions of school leaders based in five continents. Their collective insights also provide a basis for future inquiry.

\textit{Profile of international school respondents}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{l}
\hline
\textbf{International Schools} \\
\hline
9 Directors \\
3 Superintendents/Deputy Superintendents \\
3 Principals \\
1 Director of Strategic Development \\
2 Unspecified \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Respondents' positions at time of survey}
\end{table}

As Table 20 shows, the vast majority of international school leaders surveyed were senior-level administrators, including nine directors, three principals, one director of strategic development and three superintendents/deputy superintendents, as shown by Table 20.

\textsuperscript{49}A team visit in 2002 would have followed a self study initiated 12 to 18 months before, so survey responses really reflect a process that for many schools started as early as 2000.

\textsuperscript{50}Note, a presumable explanation for the lower response rate for international schools compared to other K-12 schools that had a 50% response rate is twofold: first, the extra effort involved in returning the survey forms via fax for international school respondents (versus sending the survey form back via mail in a stamped, self-addressed envelope) may have been a disincentive for international school heads to complete and return the survey as it would take more time. Not only that, not all international school heads in the sample population received the survey because of communication failures through e-mail or when faxing the survey to the schools. In addition, many overseas term schedules and vacation periods conflicted with the launch of our pilot survey.
Table 21: Range of student enrollments at respondents’ schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Under 500</th>
<th>500 to 1,000</th>
<th>1,000 to 1,500</th>
<th>1,500 to 2,000</th>
<th>2,000 or more</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Schools</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All international schools represented in the survey enroll students in grades K through 12. The sample consists of schools that range in enrollment from 250 students to 1,700 students and have an average student body of 772, as shown by Table 21.

Table 22: Respondents by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>Middle East</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Schools</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of regional profile, six of the 18 schools are based in Europe, three are in Latin America, six are in the Middle East, two are in Asia and one is in North America, as Table 22 shows.

Table 23: Number of years international schools have been involved with accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>20 to 25 years</th>
<th>15 to 20 years</th>
<th>10 to 15 years</th>
<th>5 to 10 years</th>
<th>Less than 5 years</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Schools</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 18 international schools represented in the pilot survey vary in terms of how long they have been accredited NEASC member schools: almost half the schools had their initial accreditation after 2000 and two schools have been involved in accreditation for five to ten years, as Table 23 shows. Other schools have more familiarity with the process—four schools have been accredited for more than 20 years. There are two schools for which the number of years of involvement with accreditation is unspecified because information was not provided by respondents.
Table 24: Number of years respondents’ have worked in current school leadership position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>1 year or less</th>
<th>1 to 5 years</th>
<th>6 to 10 years</th>
<th>11 to 15 years</th>
<th>16 to 20 years</th>
<th>More than 20 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International school respondents have varying degrees of leadership experience at their schools: more than two-thirds (13 respondents) have been in their current position for five years or less; four respondents have been in their position for one year or less and nine respondents have been in their position for two to five years, as shown by Table 24.

A little more than half of school heads (ten respondents) have between six and ten years of experience in their position; three respondents have between 11 and 15 years experience in their position; seven respondents have between 16 and 20 years experience and one respondent has over 20 years experience at their school. One respondent does not specify the years of experience in position at their school and is listed as “Unspecified” in Table 24.

As the results of the pilot study will show, variations in size of the student body, regional location or years of involvement with accreditation do not appear to affect the opinions of international school respondents. Although the results from this pilot study cannot be readily generalized to the larger population of accredited international schools until a larger study is undertaken, the findings from this initial effort provide a foundation and direction for future inquiry and present new knowledge about international schools which, thus far, has been notably limited.
Key Finding 9:

A majority of international school leaders surveyed believe that participation in the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education and the quality of classroom instruction at their school. Most of these respondents also agree that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short- and the long-term. Over 90% of international school leaders indicate they would worry that the quality of NEASC member schools would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in international schools.

Impact on quality of education

Both K-12 survey respondents based in New England (NE) and those based in international schools agree that accreditation has enhanced the quality of education at their school with higher rates of agreement observed for international school respondents (Statement 1, Table 25): 94% of international school heads agree that the accreditation process has enhanced the overall quality of education at their institution compared with 92% of other K-12 survey respondents who respond similarly; none of the international school heads disagree while one is uncertain.

Impact on classroom instruction

Relative to NE-based K-12 school leaders, a slightly higher proportion of international school leaders believe accreditation has improved classroom instruction (Statement 2, Table 25): 83% of international school leaders agree that participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction compared with 78% of NE-based K-12 school leaders who respond similarly; only one international school leader disagrees while one is uncertain.
Table 25: Percent who agree or strongly agree with statements in left column\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NE-based K-12 Schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1: The accreditation process has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education at my institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2: Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 8: The standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning at my institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 13: I believe accreditation affects the quality of education on an ongoing basis and not just during the time of the on-site visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 18: I believe accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 27: I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in American/international schools abroad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact on teaching and learning

Relative to NE-based K-12 survey respondents, a greater proportion of international school respondents agree that “the Standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning” (Statement 8, Table 25): 89% of international school leaders and 83% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents agree that the Standards will improve teaching and learning.

Short-term and long-term impact on school improvement

Compared to NE-based K-12 survey respondents, a greater share of international school leaders indicate that “accreditation impacts school improvement in both the short and the long-term” (Statement 18, Table 25): 94% of international school leaders and 84% of NE-based K-12 school leaders agree that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short and long-term.

\(^a\)Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
short- and long-term; none of the international school leaders disagree and one is uncertain.

Another finding reveals that most international school leaders believe that “accreditation affects the quality of education on an ongoing basis rather than just during the time of the evaluation visit” and the rate of agreement is higher for international schools than for NE-based K-12 schools (Statement 13, Table 25): whereas 94% of international school respondents agree that accreditation affects the quality of education on an ongoing basis and not just during the time of the on-site visit, 78% of NE-based K-12 school leaders agree; none of the international school leaders disagree while one is uncertain.

Ensuring educational quality at international schools

Survey findings indicate that compared with NE-based K-12 survey respondents, a noticeably greater share of international school respondents believe that the educational quality of member schools would decline absent accreditation (Statement 27, Table 25): 94% of international school leaders and 71% of other K-12 school leaders indicate that they “would worry that the educational quality of accredited schools would deteriorate” if the accreditation process were to end at accredited international schools. Considering the unique circumstances and challenges faced by international schools, this finding seems connected to their professed isolation (from peer institutions) in terms of geography. It seems reasonable then, that accreditation has greater value to international schools because it allows these schools to remain connected with peer institutions and keep their educational quality high and comparable with schools in NE.
**Key Finding 10:**

*Most international school leaders surveyed agree that participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers at their school. A majority of these respondents also believe that accreditation has resulted in better communication and teamwork among staff.*

Impact on professional development

Similar to the NE-based K-12 survey respondents, more than three-quarters of international school respondents agree that professional development training for teachers has improved as a result of participating in accreditation (Statement 3, Table 26): 85% of international school respondents and 82% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents agree that accreditation has improved professional development training for teachers. Only one international school leader disagrees while two are uncertain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>NE-based K-12 Schools</th>
<th>International Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 3:</strong> Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 4:</strong> The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 5:</strong> Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Impact on staff teamwork and communication

Most international school leaders (94%) agree that accreditation has resulted in better staff communication at their school (Statement 4, Table 26). In comparison, 82% of other NE-based K-12 school leaders respond similarly.

Over three-quarters of international school leaders believe that accreditation has resulted in greater teamwork among staff at their schools (Statement 5, Table 26). The proportion of international school leaders and NE-based K-12 school leaders agreeing is similar: 78% of international school respondents and 73% of K-12 survey respondents indicate that participation in the accreditation process has resulted in greater teamwork among staff at their school; one international school leader disagrees while three are uncertain.
Key Finding 11:

Over two-thirds of international school leaders surveyed believe that accreditation has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.

Impact on academic environment

Survey findings reveal that international school leaders and NE-based K-12 survey respondents share views regarding the impact of accreditation on academic environment—78% of international school leaders and 77% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents agree that “the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment for students” at their school (Statement 11, Table 27); one international school leader disagrees and one is uncertain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>NE-based K-12 Schools</th>
<th>International Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 11:</strong> Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Key Finding 12:

Over 80% of international school leaders surveyed believe that accreditation has led to improvements in organization, management and institutional leadership at their school. Over 85% agree that accreditation has led to improvements in institutional leadership.

Impact on school organization and management

Consistent with K-12 survey results from school leaders based in NE, the majority of international school respondents agree that accreditation improved organization and management at their school (Statement 14, Table 28): 83% of international school leaders compared with 74% of NE-based K-12 school leaders agree that participation in accreditation improved school organization and management; two international school heads disagree while one is uncertain.

Impact on school leadership

In the international school context, good leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that quality education is provided to learners. Leaders at international schools juggle a variety of difficult, unique and broad responsibilities. Their staff might easily represent over a dozen nationalities while the students may themselves represent several dozen nationalities. Another challenge relates to training and retaining teachers who are not nationals of the host country.

Compared to NE-based K-12 survey respondents, a higher proportion of international school respondents believe that accreditation has improved institutional leadership at their school (Statement 28, Table 28): whereas 68% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents indicate participation in
accreditation led to improvements in institutional leadership, 89% of international school leaders respond similarly. One guess as to why international school leaders believe accreditation improved school leadership could be that accreditation offers international school heads a way to remain connected to peer institutions and less alienated because of geographical isolation. It gives them the opportunity to learn what other school leaders are doing at schools in NE and at other international schools worldwide. More inquiry on leadership practices at international schools may identify the specific reasons that international school leaders perceive greater gains to institutional leadership as an outcome of participation in accreditation relative to K-12 school leaders back in NE.

### Table 28: Percent who agree or strongly agree with statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>NE-based K-12 Schools</th>
<th>International Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 14:</strong> Participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and management of my institution.</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 28:</strong> The accreditation process has led to improvements in institutional leadership.</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Key Finding 13:

All international school leaders surveyed agree that their school had been fairly evaluated. Over three-quarters believe that their school was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit. The majority of international school leaders also believe that the visiting teams’ recommendations were valid and thorough and that their school received sufficient guidance and support after the evaluation visit.

Fairness of team evaluations

All 18 or 100% of international school respondents surveyed agree their school was fairly evaluated (Statement 19, Table 29). In comparison, 88% of K-12 survey respondents respond similarly.

Training prior to evaluation visit

International school respondents and NE-based K-12 survey respondents, in general, share the opinion that their school “was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit” (Statement 22, Table 29): 83% of international school leaders and 88% of NE-based K-12 school leaders agree that their school received adequate training on how to prepare for an accreditation visit; none of the international school respondents disagree while three are uncertain.
Table 29: Percent who agree or strongly agree with statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>NE-based K-12 Schools</th>
<th>International Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 19:</strong> My institution was fairly evaluated.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 22:</strong> My institution was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 9:</strong> The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 20:</strong> The Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Integrity of recommendations

Comparing K-12 schools in our survey, a higher percentage of international school leaders report that the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough (Statement 9, Table 29): 94% of international school respondents compared to 84% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents agree that the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough; none of the international school heads disagree while one is uncertain.

Sufficient guidance and support after evaluation visit

Most international school respondents (83%) agree that their Commission provided sufficient guidance and support after the accreditation visit (Statement 20, Table 29). In comparison, 77% of other K-12 survey respondents respond similarly; one international school leader disagrees while two are uncertain.

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59Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
International Schools: Results, Qualitative Section
Key Finding 14:

When asked how accreditation has impacted the quality of education at their schools, international school leaders most often reported (from most to least frequently cited) that accreditation:

1. enabled their school to identify strengths and weaknesses;
2. improved instruction;
3. fostered teamwork and collegiality;
4. improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning;
5. improved school resources;
6. improved professional development;
7. made their school accountable;
8. increased community support for school initiatives;
9. led to better staffing decisions, and
10. raised staff morale

International school leaders were asked the same open-ended questions as their surveyed counterparts in New England (NE). As mentioned earlier, the qualitative responses provide depth and context allowing for a broader and deeper understanding of the school-level factors most profoundly impacted by accreditation at international schools.

Question 1 of the qualitative section of the international school survey asked, “How has accreditation impacted the quality of education at your institution? Please provide any examples you can think of.” Written statements were coded and then assigned placement in one of ten categories listed in Table 30. Each category was formed by grouping similar types of responses given by international school respondents. The ten categories that were ultimately formed represent the ten most frequently cited responses. As Table 30 on page 121 shows, international school leaders most frequently reported that accreditation has impacted the quality of education by enabling their schools to identify strengths and weaknesses (Category 1). The next most frequent response was that participation in accreditation resulted in improved instruction (Category 2). Ranked third
was the response that accreditation fostered teamwork and collegiality at schools (Category 3). Next, respondents wrote that accreditation improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning at their schools (Category 4). After that, respondents cited improvements to school resources (Category 5). Next, respondents claimed accreditation improved professional development (Category 6). The seventh most frequent response was that accreditation made schools accountable (Category 7). Respondents also reported that accreditation increased community support for school initiatives (Category 8). The next most frequent response was that accreditation led to better staffing decisions (Category 9). Respondents also reported that accreditation raised staff morale (Category 10).

Table 30: School factors impacted by accreditation—international school respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent International School Leaders Reporting</th>
<th>Percent K-12 U.S.-Based School Leaders Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enabled school to identify strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Improved instruction</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improved school resources</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improved professional development</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Provides effective system of accountability</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Increased community support for school initiatives</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Led to better staffing decisions</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Raised staff morale</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rank 1 – Enabled school to identify strengths and weaknesses

As Category 1 of Table 30 shows, when asked how accreditation has impacted the quality of education, international school respondents most frequently reported that accreditation enabled their schools to identify strengths and weaknesses, cited by 44% of these respondents. International school leaders felt somewhat more strongly than the NE-based K-12 school leaders that accreditation helped their school identify strengths and weaknesses—whereas 44% of international school respondents claimed that accreditation helped their school identify strengths and weaknesses, 39% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents answered similarly. Still, this answer was one of the top two most frequently cited responses for both groups of respondents.

International school leaders specifically claimed that the process of self-study forced an introspective and thorough assessment of the school which then precipitated comprehensive school-wide improvements. They also mentioned that the self-study process brought teachers together and increased awareness of other parts of the school.

Some international school leaders claimed that the accreditation process engendered positive change by providing schools with direction, focus and affirmation of effective practices in place. These respondents also suggested that the requirement to document findings from their self-study created a condition or mindset for forwarding goals and mobilizing the entire school to move in an agreed upon direction as a team. For instance, one international school respondent based in Europe claimed that the self-study process forces the school staff to examine all areas of the school and “helps all to look at the quality of what they are doing at school, at every level.”

Rank 2 – Improved instruction

Both the international school and NE-based K-12 school leaders reported often that accreditation improved instruction at their schools. For international school respondents, this was the second most frequently cited response, as shown by Category 2 of Table 30. International school respondents cited improved instruction nearly as frequently as the other K-12 survey respondents—38% of international
school respondents and 48% of K-12 survey respondents reported that accreditation improved instruction at their schools. However, whereas respondents from international schools tended to describe improvements related to curriculum and courses, K-12 survey respondents more often reported improvements to teaching behavior, instructional practices and student assessment.

In general, international school respondents claimed that participation in accreditation:

- Improved curriculum articulation and resulted in a more complete documentation of the curriculum.
- Improved the school schedule.
- Led to greater use of technology and multimedia in the classroom.
- Made teachers more reflective and conscientious of their classroom practices.

Moreover, international school leaders reported that accreditation focused their school more on the curriculum agenda because of the Standard that the curriculum be documented and reviewed. For example, a respondent based in Europe stated, “The process catalyzed a curriculum review which resulted in the adoption of the I.B. [International Baccalaureate]….Curriculum documentation is more thorough [as a result of accreditation]...” and another respondent noted, “support for students with learning difficulties is improving”. Another respondent based in the Middle East wrote that the accreditation process “enables us to use the objective, outside view, to push change and improvement,” which in their case led to changes in the foreign language and physical education programs.

Some international school respondents reported increased use of technology in the classroom and improvements to the school schedule. For instance, a respondent based in the Middle East claimed, “We are now more concerned about the effectiveness of instructions, staff development, the use of multimedia and integrating technology into teaching.”
Rank 3 – Fostered staff teamwork and collegiality

The third most frequent response to Question 1 was that accreditation led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality, reported by 25% of international school respondents, as shown by Category 3 of Table 30. Likewise, nearly one-quarter of the other K-12 survey respondents also claimed that accreditation resulted in more staff teamwork and collegiality at their school. Specifically, international school leaders, like many of the NE-based K-12 school leaders, claimed that accreditation enhanced communication among different grades and encouraged collaboration. For example, one international school respondent based in Europe stated that the accreditation process would enable school staff to “find out about aspects other than the curriculum” and another respondent based in the Middle East noted that the accreditation process led to “better communication and transparency.” Increased communication and teamwork, in some sense, are often inevitable outcomes of the self-study process and are emphasized in the Standards for Accreditation as well.

International schools sometimes encounter added challenges in terms of maintaining a high degree of collaboration—as international schools ordinarily have high staff turnover rates, efforts to promote a school culture founded on teamwork and collaboration are hindered because staff lack the time to develop close relationships with each other as they would if they had worked together for several years. Also, teaching staff typically represent many nationalities and cultures; In many international schools, the teaching staff is roughly one-third American, one-third citizens of the host country and one-third from other countries. Teachers who have been raised in different countries are likely to have notions about education and academic expectations which have been shaped by the cultural and educational norms and beliefs of their native countries. These beliefs can affect their instructional methods and educational expectations. Thus, promoting effective teacher collaboration may be particularly valuable for international schools because effective teamwork and communication can enable a diverse staff to align objectives, exchange instructional techniques and ultimately deliver a more consistent education.
Rank 4 – Organizational effectiveness and long-term planning

As shown by Category 9 of Table 30, 19% of international school respondents reported that accreditation improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning at their school. This response was ranked fourth of the ten most frequent responses to Question 1 and was similarly one of the most frequent responses for the other K-12 survey respondents (reported by 35%) of respondents in this group.

International school leaders described accreditation as a process that enhances a school's organizational effectiveness by encouraging systematic practices within a school, resulting in more effective planning and administration. For instance, one respondent based in the Middle East noted that the accreditation process “gives direction for us to assess our overall organization” and thus “has impacted us by helping us focus in a systematic way on areas of most importance for improvement, such as opening up articulation—[and] focusing on the writing process.”

Rank 5 – Improved school resources

Some international school respondents reported that accreditation led to improvements in their schools' resources, as shown by Category 5 of Table 30. This was the fifth most frequent response of both international and NE-based K-12 survey respondents answering Question 1, cited by 19% of international school leaders 14% of NE-based K-12 school leaders.

Rank 6 – Improved professional development

As with the NE-based K-12 survey respondents, international school respondents reported that accreditation improved professional development. This answer was given by 13% of international school respondents and was the sixth most frequent response to Question 1, as shown by Category 6 of Table 30. Likewise, ‘improved professional development’ was the sixth most frequent response of K-12 survey respondents as well, reported by 10% of respondents in this group. Unfortunately, international school respondents seldom provided
specific examples of the ways in which accreditation produced improvements in professional development. A few respondents claimed that accreditation improved professional development by placing greater emphasis on technology training for teachers. A few suggested that accreditation simply made staff development a higher priority at their school.

**Rank 7 – Made school accountable**

Like the NE-based K-12 school leaders, international school leaders reported that participation in accreditation made their school accountable, reported by 13% of international school leaders and 9% of NE-based K-12 school leaders, as shown by Category 7 of Table 30. For both groups, this was the seventh most frequent response to Question 1.

**Rank 8 – Increased community support for school initiatives**

While both NE-based K-12 and international school survey respondents reported that participation in accreditation resulted in more community support for school initiatives, a greater share of international school respondents (13%) reported that participation in accreditation resulted in increased community support for school initiatives compared to NE-based K-12 survey respondents (4%) as shown by Category 8 of Table 30. Respondents noted that having an objective group come to their school and make recommendations gave credibility to schools’ objectives and actions.
**Rank 9 – Better staffing decisions**

While 4% of NE-based K-12 school leaders claimed that accreditation resulted in better staffing decisions, 13% of international school leaders felt similarly. This was the ninth most frequent response to Question 1, as shown by Category 9 of Table 30. However, respondents rarely wrote specific details about how accreditation prompted better staffing decisions.

**Rank 10 – Raised staff morale**

Similar proportions of international school leaders (6%) and NE-based K-12 school leaders (5%) reported that accreditation raised staff morale at their school, as shown by Category 10 of Table 30. This was thus the tenth most frequently given answer to Question 1 for international school respondents and similarly was the eleventh most frequent response of other K-12 survey respondents.
School Resources

The second question of the qualitative section of the survey asked, “How important is the accreditation process in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies, including technology, library and multimedia supplies?” Answers were coded by placing each response in one of three categories: “Important,” “Neutral” and “Not Important.” In Table 31, the number below “Important” represents the percentage of international school leaders indicating that accreditation was important for improving school resources. The number under “Neutral” represents the percentage of international school leaders who did not explicitly state if accreditation improved their school’s resources. The number in the column marked “Not Important” represents the percentage of international school leaders who noted that accreditation was not important in terms of improving the quality of resources at their school. Some respondents reported that accreditation did not have an impact on the quality of their school’s resources because their school had already made school resources a major priority and/or already had sufficient technology, library and other resources for all their students.

Table 31: Percentage of international school respondents who reported that accreditation was important in terms of improving school resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Schools (N=17)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Schools</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Finding 15:

More than two-thirds of international school leaders surveyed reported that participation in the accreditation process improved the quality of school resources, including technology, multimedia and library resources.

Findings from the survey revealed that over two-thirds or 71% of international school leaders reported that accreditation was important in terms of improving the quality of school resources; 18% of these respondents were “Neutral” and 12% indicated that accreditation was not important in terms of improving the quality of their school’s resources, as shown by Table 31.

Respondents reported that participation in accreditation improved resources primarily by:

- Identifying needs
- Helping school plan and budget for resources in the long-term
- Helping school use existing resources more efficiently, and
- Justifying needs to the community

Detailed findings follow:

Identifying needs

Some international school leaders reported that accreditation impacted the quality of school resources by identifying needs. Like the other NE-based K-12 school leaders, international school leaders indicated that the self-study and Standards were instrumental in prompting their schools to assess physical resources in a thorough and systematic fashion. For instance, one international school director based in Europe noted, for instance, that “the process has value in prompting schools to reflect on their pedagogic resources in a regular and systematic way.” Respondents also wrote that the accreditation process made their school aware of needs they may previously not have considered. One respondent based in Europe commented that the process “makes us aware of needs that we may not
have thought about,” while another respondent based in North America noted that the process, “gives us an unbiased external measure on how we are doing with all these aspects [technology, library and multimedia resources].”

### Helping school plan and budget for resources in the long-term

International school leaders claimed that the accreditation process assists them with strategic planning such as assessing long-term needs regarding physical resources. A few respondents claimed that reviewing their school against the Standards assisted them with financially planning for resources. For example, one respondent wrote that, “School facilities have improved as a result of our budget system, introduced after the preliminary visit.” Another respondent based in Europe commented “the review of school against standards helps strategic planning of financial resource use…[the process] supports curriculum review cycle, department review of resources…[and]…provides a focus for improvement.”

### Helping school use existing resources more efficiently

Like the NE-based K-12 survey respondents, international school respondents reported that the accreditation process helped their school use existing resources more efficiently. A few indicated felt the process forced them to reflect on how resources were used and provided an awareness of all that was there for them. For instance, one respondent based in Latin America stated that the process “has led to better use of resources: time, human and material…”

### Justifying needs to the community

International school leaders sometimes claimed that the accreditation process enabled their school to justify requests to the School Board or community. Some reported that the visiting team recommendations were taken seriously by school community members. According to one respondent, the process “gives support to the school in its requests for funds from the Board.” Others noted that the process identified the importance of library and technology resources. One respondent based in Latin America commented, “The recommendation for improving technology equipment produced immediate results. Although our projects
on the library were deemed convenient, we have intensified progress in this area.”

Surprisingly, findings from the international school pilot survey indicate that despite differences between K-12 schools in NE and international schools abroad, there are more similarities in terms of the ways that participation in accreditation impacts the quality of education at NEASC member schools. Answers to Question 1—“How has accreditation impacted the quality of education at your institution?”—show that across institution types and even across geographical regions, similar school-level factors are consistently affected by participation in the accreditation process.

Furthermore, these school-level factors are perceived by school leaders at all kinds of institutions to have direct and indirect impacts on the quality of education. While only further inquiry and studies on accreditation and international schools will provide more explicit information about the relationship between accreditation and the quality of education at international schools, the findings from this preliminary study point to facets of the accreditation process that are regarded by school leaders as profoundly affecting the quality of education. These results also lay the groundwork for future research into international schools abroad which, thus far, have seldom been analyzed or written about extensively.

Furthermore, as the results reveal, many of the opinions and experiences of international school leaders surveyed parallel those from other respondents representing accredited schools in NE, indicating that accreditation propels improvement among schools in similar ways regardless of national setting or other contextual differences that distinguish international schools. We can conclude, therefore, that survey findings from member overseas schools are demonstrative of the overarching trends observed among NEASC member institutions.
Higher Education Institutions: Results, Quantitative Section
Higher Education Institutions

In recent years, quality assurance in higher education has become a rising concern for policymakers, educators and general members of the public. Questions regarding quality assurance at the postsecondary level surface as students, parents, employers and ordinary citizens increasingly seek affirmation that colleges and universities are preparing students to possess the skills and competency required for an increasingly knowledge-driven, global economy.

Shortly after the NEASC Accreditation and Quality of Education Survey was sent to the K-12 schools, a similar survey was mailed to leaders of accredited higher education institutions that underwent team evaluation visits after 2002. (The term ‘leaders’ refers primarily to college and university presidents, vice presidents, chancellors, and other senior administrators.) NEASC’s objective in surveying heads of higher education institutions was to gain a deeper understanding of the institution-level factors most demonstrably impacted by accreditation based on the experiences of leaders representing a broad array of colleges and universities in New England. Of course, teaching and learning at the postsecondary level differs greatly from teaching and learning at the K-12 level. Thus, a slightly different survey was developed for higher education institutions with questions specific to colleges and universities. (Refer to Appendix A.3 for survey questions.)

Since 1927, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges has had a strong relationship with regional colleges and universities. Today, CIHE’s membership has grown to include over 97% of New England’s degree-granting higher education institutions. Through the years, accreditation has served as a mechanism for prompting and supporting institutional improvement among regional colleges and universities. New England’s cluster of outstanding colleges and universities has developed a reputation for being a world-class hub of intellectualism, cutting edge research and innovation.

Relative to other countries, American higher education institutions have great autonomy and are largely free from direct government control. Even public institutions enjoy considerable flexibility and independence. Historically, this autonomy has produced variety in higher education. New England exemplifies this trend well—applicants have a plethora of colleges and universities to consider. Today, the region attracts thousands of non-New Englanders and foreign students who come to attend area colleges and universities they believe offer a high quality education.
Accreditation has been a force for ensuring the public of the quality of education offered within the region’s colleges and universities. A stated aim of higher education accreditation is to provide both quality and public assurance through the processes of comprehensive self-study and peer evaluation which are guided by Standards conceived by professionals in the field.

Assessing quality at the higher education level is complicated. This is due to varying views about what specific indicators of ‘high quality’ are, given the great variation in institutional objectives and priorities. Moreover, compared to the K-12 sector, existing research on indicators of quality in higher education to date is minimal.

The results from the higher education survey cannot be readily generalized to all accredited higher education institutions as there were 75 institutions that had evaluation visits since 2002. Of these, 35 respondents completed the survey, giving a 47% response rate. Nonetheless, these findings demonstrate various facets of the accreditation process that reportedly have had an impact on the quality of education. Thus, some groundwork has been laid to encourage and guide future study of quality assurance in higher education.

Profile of Higher Education Respondents

The sample of respondents consists chiefly of college and university presidents or vice presidents. Overall, the sample has 24 presidents, one interim vice president, four vice presidents of academic affairs, one senior vice president, one executive assistant to the president, one division director, one administrative director, one vice president of institutional research and one associate vice president of academic affairs.
Table 32: Public and independent higher education institutions in survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Independent Institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 32 shows, there are 21 respondents representing public institutions and 14 respondents from independent institutions; five respondents do not specify whether or not their institution is public or independent.

Table 33: Respondents’ years of experience in current institutional position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>1 year or less</th>
<th>1 to 5 years</th>
<th>6 to 10 years</th>
<th>11 to 15 years</th>
<th>16 to 20 years</th>
<th>More than 20 years</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher education respondents vary in terms of the number of years they have served in their institution’s leadership position. As Table 33 shows, most respondents (66%) have between one and 10 years experience in their current leadership position; four respondents (11%) have been in their current position for one year or less; nine respondents (26%) have been in their current position for one to five years; 10 respondents (29%) have been in their current position for six to 10 years; three respondents (9%) have between 11 and 15 years of experience in their current position and seven respondents (20%) have been in their current position for 16 to 20 years. One respondent does not specify the number of years served in his/her current position.

Table 34: Number of years institutions have participated in accreditation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>75 years or more</th>
<th>50 to 75 years</th>
<th>25 to 50 years</th>
<th>Less than 10 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 34 shows, there is some variation in the number of years institutions have been involved with NEASC accreditation: two institutions received their initial accreditation less than 10 years ago; 26 institutions (74%) received their initial accreditation 25 to 50 years ago; seven institutions received their initial
accreditation 50 to 75 years ago and one institution had its initial accreditation 75 or more years ago.

Table 35: Enrollments of respondents’ institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Under 1,000</th>
<th>1,000 to 4,999</th>
<th>5,000 to 9,999</th>
<th>10,000 to 14,999</th>
<th>15,000 to 19,999</th>
<th>More than 20,000</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 35 shows, most respondents represent institutions with less than 5,000 students enrolled. The institution with the lowest enrollment has 18 students and the institution with the largest enrollment has 15,436 students. Average enrollment across institutions is 2,614. There are 12 institutions enrolling fewer than 1,000 students, 16 institutions enrolling 1,000 to 4,999 students, one institution enrolling 5,000 to 9,999 students; one institution enrolling 10,000 to 14,999 students and one institution enrolling 15,000 to 19,999 students; four respondents do not specify enrollment and are listed as “Unspecified” in Table 27.
Key Finding 16:

Higher education survey respondents overwhelmingly agree that the accreditation process fulfilled the function of promoting quality and providing public assurance.

All 35 higher education survey respondents (100%) indicate that “the accreditation process fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of education” (Statement 1, Table 36).

Also, 34 of 35 higher education respondents (97%) agree that “the accreditation process fulfilled the function of promoting quality” (Statement 2, Table 36); none of these respondents disagree with Statement 2 while one is uncertain. Findings are consistent for public and independent institutions: all 21 respondents from public institutions (100%) and 13 of 14 respondents from independent institutions (93%), agree that accreditation met the function of promoting quality at their institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Independent Institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation process fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of education.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation process fulfilled the function of promoting quality at my institution.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td><strong>97%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Key Finding 17:

More than 90% of higher education respondents agree that participation in the accreditation process was useful to their institution’s faculty and staff. Over two-thirds of these respondents indicate that accreditation helped their governing board understand the institutions’ mission and academic programs.

Overall, 34 of 35 higher education survey respondents (97%) agree that participation in accreditation was useful to faculty and staff at their institution (Statement 3, Table 37); none of these respondents disagree while one is uncertain. Similar results are observed for public and independent institutions—all 21 respondents from public institutions (100%) and 13 of 14 respondents representing independent institutions (93%), agree that the accreditation process was useful for faculty and staff at their institutions.

Twenty-three of 35 respondents (66%) indicate that participation in accreditation helped their governing board understand the institution’s mission and academic programs (Statement 22, Table 37); five respondents disagree while six are uncertain. Respondents from public and independent institutions respond similarly: 14 of 21 respondents from public institutions (67%) and nine of 14 respondents from independent institutions (64%), agree that participation in the accreditation process assisted the governing board with understanding the mission and academic programs of the institution.
Table 37: Percent of higher education respondents who agree or strongly agree with statements in left column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Independent Institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 3:</strong> Participation in accreditation was useful to faculty and staff at my institution.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td><strong>97%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 22:</strong> Participation in accreditation helped our governing board understand the institution’s mission and academic programs.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td><strong>66%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
**Key Finding 18:**

Most higher education survey respondents agree that the accreditation process helped clarify important strengths and concerns at their institution. Over three-quarters of these respondents indicate that accreditation helped their institution focus more productively on planning. Over 80% agree that the accreditation process motivates their institution to focus more on assessment of student learning.

Decision makers at higher education institutions face unique challenges as they are expected to respond to the needs and desires of a range of stakeholders including, students, faculty, parents, staff, and community residents. Responding to the concerns of so many constituents can be particularly demanding given that many institutions are fragmented by departments and divided in their views about the most important issues at their institution.

Overall, 34 of 35 respondents (97%) agree that “the accreditation process helped to clarify important strengths and concerns” at their institution (Statement 4, Table 38); one respondent disagrees. Breaking down these results, all 21 respondents from public institutions (100%) and 13 of 14 respondents representing independent institutions (93%) agree accreditation helped clarify institutional strengths and concerns at their institutions.

Twenty-nine out of 35 higher education respondents (83%) agree that “the accreditation process helped them focus more productively on planning” (Statement 10, Table 38). Comparing public and independent institutions, respondents from public institutions note more often that the accreditation process helped them focus more productively on planning—all 21 respondents from public institutions (100%) believe that accreditation helped their institution focus more productively on planning while eight of 14 respondents from independent institutions (57%) respond similarly.
Twenty-nine of 34 higher education respondents (85%) agree the accreditation process “motivates their institution to focus more on assessment of student learning” (Statement 6, Table 39); five respondents disagree while one is uncertain. This result was expected given that CIHE standards stress that institutions use data to understand how students are learning, use the data to improve the academic program and document the learning goals for every program offered regularly.

Comparing public and independent institutions, a higher proportion of respondents from public institutions agree that the accreditation process motivates their institution to focus more on assessment of student learning—20 of 21 respondents from public institutions (95%) and nine of 13 respondents from independent institutions (69%) believe their institution was more motivated to focus on student learning.

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58Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.

59One respondent did not answer this question leaving 34 instead of 35 respondents.
Key Finding 19:

More than 90% of higher education respondents indicate that the level of the quality of education in New England would be different absent accreditation. Over three-quarters of respondents also agreed that the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.

Thirty-two of 35 higher education respondents (91%) disagree that the level of “the quality of education in New England would be unchanged if member institutions never participated in accreditation” (Statement 7, Table 39); two respondents agree with Statement 7 while one is uncertain. Comparing public and independent institutions, a higher proportion of respondents from independent institutions disagree with Statement 7 than respondents from public institutions—18 of 21 respondents from public institutions (86%) and all 14 respondents from independent institutions (100%) agree the quality of education at member institutions would be changed absent accreditation.

As shown by Table 39, 28 of 34 higher education respondents (82%) acknowledge that “the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England” (Statement 20)\(^\text{60}\); three respondents disagree with Statement 20 while one is uncertain.

Respondents from public institutions feel more strongly than respondents from independent institutions that “the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England”—19 of 21 respondents from public institutions (90%) and nine of 13 respondents from independent institutions (69%) agree that “the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.”

\(^\text{60}\)One respondent did not answer this question leaving 34 instead of 35 respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Independent Institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 7:</strong> The level of the quality of education in New England would be unchanged if member institutions as a whole never participated in accreditation.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 20:</strong> The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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61Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Key Finding 20:

Most higher education respondents agree that their institution was fairly evaluated and that the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough. Most respondents also acknowledge that their institution has the resources to follow through with changes related to meeting standards set by the Commission.

All 35 higher education respondents (100%) agreed that their institution was fairly evaluated (Statement 15, Table 40).

Thirty-three of 35 respondents (97%) agree “the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough” (Statement 9, Table 40); one respondent disagrees. Comparing public and independent institutions, all 21 respondents representing public institutions (100%) and 12 of 14 respondents from independent institutions (86%) agree that the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Survey</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Independent Institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 15</strong>: My institution was fairly evaluated.*</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement 9</strong>: The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.*</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage figures are based on the proportion of respondents who agree out of total respondents in the corresponding Commission.
Higher Education Institutions: Results, Qualitative Section
The qualitative section of the higher education survey included three open-ended questions. The first question asked, “Can you describe what you believe are the greatest strengths of the accreditation process?” Following a content analysis of all the answers, responses were methodically coded and grouped into categories (in the same way as was done for the qualitative answers for the K-12 and international school surveys). Categories were formed by grouping similar types of responses given by higher education respondents. Each qualitative question was expected to take a few minutes to answer and respondents were instructed to continue on a separate paper if they needed additional writing space.
Key Finding 21:

According to survey respondents representing higher education institutions, the greatest strengths of the accreditation process (listed from most frequently cited to least frequently cited) were:

1. Peer-review;
2. Self-study;
3. More effective planning;
4. Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community;
5. Enabling effective assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses;
6. Standards for Accreditation;
7. Accountability (public assurance and quality assurance), and
8. Thoroughness.

As shown by Table 41, respondents representing higher education institutions reported the following to be the greatest strengths of the accreditation process (ranked in order from most to least frequently cited): peer review (Rank 1); self-study (Rank 2); more effective planning (Rank 3); greater collaboration (Rank 4); enabling effective assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses (Rank 5); Standards for Accreditation (Rank 6); accountability through public and quality assurance (Rank 7); and thoroughness (Rank 8).
Table 41: Percentage of respondents reporting greatest strengths of the accreditation process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peer-review</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-study</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More effective planning</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Enabling effective assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CIHE Standards for Accreditation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Accountability (provides public and quality assurance)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thoroughness</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Rank 1—Peer review_

As shown by Category 1 of Table 41, higher education respondents reported most frequently that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was peer review, cited by 52% of respondents. Specifically, respondents claimed their institutions benefited from peer review because of the honesty, objectivity and practical feedback received from peer evaluators.

Some claimed that the peer review process was positive because peer evaluators offered counsel and helpful ideas. For instance, one college president in our survey valued the “objective feedback from colleagues.” Another respondent noted: “The greatest strengths of the accreditation process are the twin principles of self-study and peer review…When external evaluation is sought, it should be performed by professionals with equally high qualifications—peer review. Only through these principles can we make full use of new knowledge and expertise and ensure programs of highest quality.”

Respondents also indicated that the diversity of team evaluators, representing a wide spectrum of colleagues from other institutions, was a fundamental strength of the accreditation process. Peer review also reportedly gave staff an opportunity to interact with and exchange information with equal colleagues who share a concrete understanding of issues and challenges confronted by higher education institutions, thereby allowing peer evaluators to make realistic recommendations.

_It helped us gain clearer self knowledge — clear, objective picture of our strengths and weaknesses but within the context of standards that ALL New England institutions are evaluated by._

(College/University Interim President, ME)
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Rank 2—Self-study

The second most frequently cited strength of the accreditation process was the self-study, reported by 44% of higher education respondents as shown by Category 2 of Table 41. The self-study is intensive and necessitates the participation of constituencies throughout an institution. During an institutional self-study, departments and offices throughout an institution collaborate and collect data, as required, over the course of several months. Through this process, respondents claimed, staff at their institution learned about other areas and departments. The self-study process, as one college president noted, helped “gain clearer clearer self-knowledge” and a “clear, objective picture of our strengths and weaknesses…within the context of standards that ALL [respondent’s emphasis] New England institutions are evaluated by.”

Undertaking an internal self-assessment, according to some, affected institutional improvement by forcing the institution to look at all its programs and operations. One respondent commented that “information about all aspects of the college is available to everyone who cares to access it no matter what the job title. Some respondents stated that, although the self-study involved hard work, ultimately, they viewed the process as worthwhile. For instance, one respondent noted that the self-study “was a laborious project, sometimes sensitive, but, on the whole a positive experience.”

Rank 3—More effective planning

Not surprisingly, several respondents reported that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it led to more effective planning at their institution. This was the third most frequently cited strength of the accreditation process, reported by 40% of higher education respondents.

The CIHE Standards explicitly address issues of governance. Some respondents suggested that accreditation led to more effective planning by prompting an increased focus on the institutional mission and long-term priorities related to that mission. One respondent commented, “The process focuses the faculty and administration to think about where the institution is in looking at each of the standards [sic].”

Higher education respondents also reported that they used the accreditation process as a tool for strategic planning. The process, they noted, guided long-
term goals and at the same time, prompted the administration and faculty to more proactively deliver on identified objectives and priorities. For example, one respondent described the process as an “external stimulus for change” while another wrote that accreditation provides “direction for continuous work.” The process, as one respondent noted, “helps set achievable goals.” In a sense, accreditation was seen to forward the institution’s agenda and ensure it supported the mission statement. One respondent wrote, “The accreditation process helps focus on mission and goals…Institutions develop an agenda for and has a discussion as to who they are and where they are going.”

**Rank 4--Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community**

As shown by Table 41, about one-third of the respondents (32%) reported that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it fostered collaboration and the unification of the college or university community. Respondents claimed that the self-study, in particular, promoted communication between individuals and groups who otherwise might not interact or understand the responsibilities or concerns of other staff members or departments.

Institutions are required to engage all the different departments during the self-study. As a result, faculty, administrators, students, and others representing all areas of the institution begin an ongoing discourse and set up teams to undertake different tasks for the self-study. In this way, lines of dialogue are opened up, information is shared and a sense of ownership engendered. One respondent stated that the process resulted in “creating community collaboration among college community members”. Another respondent concurred, stating that the greatest strength of accreditation brought “board, staff, alums and students together to evaluate the school.” Others felt the process encouraged collegiality or “collegueship” as one respondent said.
**Rank 5--Enabling effective assessment of strengths and weaknesses**

Nearly one-third of the respondents (28%) reported that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was that it enabled institutions to effectively identify strengths and weaknesses, as shown by Category 5 of Table 41. This was the fifth most frequent response to Question 1. Respondents claimed, for instance, that through the self-study and subsequent team evaluation visit, areas of needed improvement were identified ranging from academics, course offerings, staff and faculty needs, to student services, health services, budgeting, fundraising and safety.

The CIHE Standards were regarded by some to be a foundation to assess their institution effectively to pinpoint areas of improvement and areas of strength. When strengths were identified, it provided staff with validation and motivation to continue good work. One college president wrote, “The opportunity to really focus closely on all areas and to assess strengths and weaknesses…it’s like a yearly physical exam, only on a ten year cycle!” Another respondent noted, “The accreditation process provides an opportunity for the college to take ‘a long long look’ at itself and draw some conclusions about strengths and weaknesses…. The visiting team thus provides some validation of the college’s findings. Such validation is done by colleagues and peers.” The self-study also prompted reflection about priorities, goals and future needs. This reflection was particularly valued by college and university presidents representing public institutions. For instance, one respondent wrote, “The accreditation process stimulates university to engage in concerted, in-depth reflection and evaluation concerning our strengths and weaknesses. This is tremendously helpful.”

**Rank 6--The Standards for Accreditation**

As Category 6 of Table 41 shows, 20% of respondents indicated that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was the Standards for Accreditation developed by peer higher education practitioners. For one, respondents reported that the Standards were a useful benchmarking tool to evaluate their institution. They claimed the Standards were comprehensive and realistic as well as uniform yet adaptable to each institution. The responses also indicated that college and university leaders felt the Standards provided a framework for effective institutional self-assessment and were a “well-organized standards sequence,” as one respondent noted. Others commented that the process is strengthened because “external standards are used” as stated by a college president in Maine.

*It [accreditation] helped us gain clearer self knowledge -- clear, objective picture of our strengths and weaknesses but within the context of standards that ALL New England institutions are evaluated by.*

(College/University President, ME)
One respondent wrote, “Evaluating our status against the standards is a healthy exercise and promotes healthy discussion campuswide…. All institutions being held to the same standards was viewed as a positive.

**Rank 7—Accountability (public assurance and quality assurance)**

Slightly more than one-tenth of the respondents (12%) indicated that the greatest strength of accreditation was that the process promotes a system of accountability and provides public assurance of the quality of education offered at an accredited college or university, as shown by category 7 of Table 41. One college president stated, “It holds an institution up to public scrutiny in a fair and honest manner” while another noted that the process “provides some assurances of quality to the general public and enhances transfer opportunities for graduates.”

**Rank 8—Thoroughness**

As Category 8 of Table 41 shows, 12% of the respondents reported that the greatest strength of the accreditation process was its thoroughness, as denoted by Category 8. Undeniably, the process of self-study entails a great deal of effort as members of the campus community undertake a comprehensive self-assessment to examine their institution against the CIHE Standards. The completion of the self-study directly precedes the team evaluation visit and the institution, by that point, has prepared a thorough report detailing its findings and conclusions drawn from the self-study. The process is both intensive and extensive as every area and aspect of the institution is explored, including courses, teaching staff, facilities, health services, student services, admissions, academic programs and departments, budget, governance and administration. One college president stated that this kind of “college-wide approach to accreditation” was a key strength of the process. Another respondent commented, "The accreditation process enabled the institution to review and access all of its divisions, programs, and operations. We organized teams for each of the standards, and these teams undertook a thorough assessment. It was a laborious project, sometimes sensitive, but, on the whole a positive experience.”
Summary of Findings
Summary of Findings

The current debate surrounding best practices in education has spawned a number of research studies which identify factors that enhance student learning and promote institutional effectiveness. Some of these factors include: quality of classroom teachers; degree of staff communication and teamwork; school climate; range of professional development training for teachers and staff; the selection and design of curriculum content; the variety of instructional inputs for students with disabilities, limited English proficiency or other special learning needs; degree of student-centered instruction employed in classrooms; the rigor of the academic program; and degree to which the administration and faculty engage in collaborative decision-making. For decades, NEASC accreditation has greatly influenced these factors in New England’s educational institutions. NEASC accreditation standards are purposefully broad so that they may apply to numerous and different institutions. A longstanding strength of the accreditation process has been its versatility, that is, its applicability among a broad range of institutions, each with specific and varied values and objectives dictated by the community it serves.

This report, based on findings from a survey completed by 279 of 581 potential K-16 leaders among NEASC-accredited institutions, demonstrates clearly that accreditation has a significant and positive impact on educational institutions of all types and grade-levels, though no two institutions are impacted in exactly the same way.

The NEASC study sought to gather measurable insights about the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions, which include public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools, technical and career schools, higher education institutions and international schools worldwide. In order to gain a more extensive understanding of what constitutes quality education, NEASC queried school leaders, recognizing that institutions differ in characteristics such as in student demographics and institutional resources which inevitably factor into the opinions conveyed by respondents. The study also intended to determine if school leaders perceive the impact of accreditation on the quality of education as one which is short-range, long-range or both, while examining differences across Commissions and institution types.

63

63 I.e., comparing small and large institutions, respondents’ years in current leadership position, NE-based schools v.v. international school data, public school per pupil expenditures, independent school tuitions, etc. in relation to responses regarding accreditation.
The results of the Regional Accreditation and Quality of Education Survey are divided into three parts, with the first describing the results based on responses of school leaders who completed the K-12 survey (i.e., CPSS, CPEMS, CTCI and CIS member institutions). This group of 226 respondents is the largest in the sample. The second part describes results from the pilot survey received from 18 heads of international schools. Responses from international school leaders were limited due to a small pool of 50 schools which underwent a team visit since 2000 and unreliable postal systems in several of the host countries, reducing the sample size. The third set of results is based on a higher education survey completed by 35 heads of member colleges and universities (i.e., CIHE member institutions sampled). In total, 581 school leaders and postsecondary heads received surveys of which 279 responded providing an overall response rate of 48%.

1.0 K-12 Survey Respondents

The largest group of survey respondents (N=226) represent K-12 schools (public and independent). There are 18 international school respondents and 35 respondents from postsecondary institutions. A difference in representation proportionate to Commission size had been anticipated. Findings only profile institutions which had evaluation visits in the last three years following the typical 8-12 months of self-study. Nonetheless, this study of the effects of school accreditation provides a new examination of institutional and classroom factors that impact teaching and learning to inform the discourse on best practices.

Findings from the K-12 survey, sent to school leaders representing CPSS, CPEMS, CTCI and CIS member institutions, reveal that accreditation has positively impacted the quality of education at the vast majority of respondents’ schools. This finding is supported by both quantitative and qualitative survey data from sampled public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools and technical and career schools.

The quantitative results show that 92% of respondents (207 of 226) believe that accreditation has enhanced the overall quality of education at their schools. More than three-quarters of respondents (177 of 226 or 78%) agree that participation in accreditation has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction. Some disagreement (35 of 226 or 15%) and uncertainty (14 of 226 or 6% of respondents) was expected since schools vary in existing instructional resources such as updated and relevant textbooks, high quality teaching materials, appropriate physical facilities to promote a healthy learning environment, professional development opportunities and quality or experience of teaching staff. That noted, schools which already have excellent instructional resources supporting a
strong academic program, are less likely to receive recommendations which call for making improvements to instruction. In contrast, schools with inadequate instructional resources are more likely to receive recommendations seeking improvements to deficiencies identified by the accreditation process. Thus, schools that have received more recommendations regarding instruction are more likely to have been impacted by accreditation than are schools that already demonstrate adequate and effective instructional resources and teaching practices.

Other findings show that over three-quarters or 83% of respondents (186 of 225) agree that the Standards set by the Commissions will help improve teaching and learning at respondents’ schools. And, 71% of respondents (160 of 226) also agree that “the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate” absent the accreditation process. Nearly three-quarters or 74% of respondents (166 of 224) believe that accreditation has led to improvements in the academic environment, such as the classroom and non-classroom environments. Over two-thirds or 69% of respondents (156 of 226) feel accreditation improved professional development training for staff. More than half or 60% of respondents (135 of 224) agree that accreditation improved the work environment for staff.

Nearly three-quarters or 74% of respondents (166 of 223) agree that participation in accreditation has improved organization and management at their school. Over three-quarters or 82% of respondents (185 of 226) believe accreditation has resulted in better staff communication and almost three-quarters or 73% (166 of 226) agree that participation in accreditation led to greater teamwork among staff. Also, more than three-quarters or 84% of respondents (188 of 225) believe that accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term.

The qualitative section of the survey enabled school leaders to express in their own words their perceptions and experiences about how accreditation impacted the quality of education at their schools. These responses revealed that accreditation has a much broader impact than presumed. Feedback from respondents highlight that there are many facets of school instruction that influence the quality of education, including physical resources, school environment and teaching practices, types of professional development activities for teachers, the degree to which teachers and schools convey high expectations and collaboration in lesson-planning.
Data from the qualitative responses demonstrate that the accreditation process was viewed by K-12 school leaders as having a primary impact on three main school components: (1) instruction, (2) institutional effectiveness, and (3) school resources.

1.1 Impact on instruction

Survey feedback indicates that accreditation’s greatest impact among K-12 schools is on instruction. Overall, 48% of respondents cited improved instruction in describing how accreditation has impacted the quality of education at their schools. Specifically, respondents claimed accreditation impacted instruction by resulting in:

- More student-centered instruction, including more hands-on learning, use of smaller learning communities
- Higher expectations for students
- Improved curricula
- Improved assessment and use of student data
- Improved teaching practices and courses
- Improved school schedule and courses
- Elimination of tracking and switch to heterogeneous grouping.

These accreditation outcomes resonate with known best practice research to raise student academic achievement. In particular, recent research points to the benefits in student learning when teachers have high expectations for students alongside a rigorous academic program. Research indicates that high expectations are associated with gains in student achievement because the teachers’ expectations are internalized by their students (Lumsden, 1997). Ample research also shows that student-centered lessons, smaller learning communities and heterogeneous grouping in place of tracking raise the academic achievement of students. In terms of curricular improvements, respondents often noted that a systemic and regular curricular review, which the Standards necessitate, proves beneficial. Respondents also claimed that, the Standards for Accreditation, which require schools to gather student data and evaluate methods of student assessment, had prompted a thorough analysis of student assessment methods conducted, thus improving assessment practices at their schools. Research confirms that effective student assessment practices positively impact student learning.

Survey findings also reveal that schools benefited from accreditation because school staff members were exposed to new learning trends and innovations, according to 9% of respondents.
1.2 Impact on Institutional Effectiveness

Survey findings indicate that over one-third (39%) of respondents report that accreditation affects educational quality by improving institutional effectiveness. Respondents note, for example, that they benefit from “positive pressure” and that the process enables schools to engage in serious “self-reflection.” It also prompts immediate action to address identified areas of weakness. In addition, school leaders suggest that the accreditation process provides affirmation and validation of good practices which, many claim, is one aspect of the process highly valued by the school staff.

K-12 survey results show that 35% of respondents report that the accreditation process improves institutional effectiveness by enhancing organizational and administrative effectiveness and encouraging long-term planning. (Independent K-12 school leaders report this most often.) In general, respondents suggest that their school’s organizational effectiveness improved owing to the accreditation process because:

- The accreditation process had recommitted the school staff to the mission of the school and had prompted greater focus on long-term planning.
- The recommendations of the visiting team had helped the school with decision-making, and
- The accreditation process had improved the mission statement or had helped with the formulation of a new mission statement.

Consistency and continuity are also named outcomes, cited by 4% of school leaders. And, 4% also report that better staffing decisions had been made as a result of accreditation.

Institutional effectiveness is bolstered by increased community and parental involvement and increased community support for school initiatives. Surveyed school leaders (5%) claim that the accreditation process has led to more community and parental involvement and 7% report that the process has resulted in increased community support for school initiatives. Respondents frequently comment that the accreditation process has been effective in fostering school support and community involvement because recommendations came from an objective and independent source. A number of respondents report greater community confidence in the school’s leadership decisions and practices.

Respondents also state that accreditation has resulted in more continuity and consistency (cited by 4% of respondents) and has provided an effective system for accountability and public assurance (cited by 9% of respondents).
For instance, some claim the process provides ongoing focus; others claim it has led to more consistency in the curriculum. Others suggest the process has promoted integrity and public assurance through the use of standards, systemic assessment and peer-review.

While there is limited research on the impact of a school’s organizational effectiveness on teaching and learning, findings clearly demonstrate that school leaders in the NEASC survey strongly believe that a school’s institutional effectiveness impacts educational quality.

A number of school leaders state that the accreditation process has improved the professional climate of the school by fostering teamwork and collegiality. Of K-12 survey respondents, 21% cite greater staff teamwork and collegiality as outcomes of the accreditation process. Specifically, respondents suggest that teamwork and collegiality had been encouraged by the accreditation process because it:

- Stimulated dialogue and more inter-grade and inter-department communication
- Fostered staff unity and reduced feelings of isolation and fragmentation, and
- Promoted collaboration and the development of ‘staff work teams’ or ‘Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)’. In this way it also led to more collective problem-solving

Past research on teacher collaboration shows that there are positive outcomes for student learning and achievement when more teachers work together to plan lessons, brainstorm or problem-solve.

In another finding, 5% of respondents report that the accreditation process has increased staff morale at their school. Although there is limited research on how staff morale impacts teaching and learning, NEASC survey findings indicate that high staff morale has a positive effect on the quality of education.

1.3 Impact on School Resources

Overall, 75% of respondents indicate that the accreditation process is important in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies. These findings are virtually parallel across the Commissions. A small number of respondents (14%) do not believe that the accreditation process improved their school’s resources, yet some of these respondents also note that their school already had adequate resources for their students so that accreditation would only have a minimal impact in this area. Meanwhile, 11% of
respondents indicate the process was neither important nor unimportant in terms of improving the quality of school resources. When asked, “How important is the accreditation process in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies, including library, technology and multimedia supplies,” respondents note that accreditation improves school resources by:

- Justifying needs to the community.
- Keeping schools updated and equal in terms of resources.
- Identifying needs or weaknesses with regard to school resources and supplies.
- Leading to more efficient use of existing resources.
- Promoting the development of resources and a focus on long-term planning.

2.0 International School Survey Respondents

The results of the international school survey, a pilot survey completed by 18 international school leaders, largely parallel the K-12 survey results. The international school survey is treated as a pilot study primarily because the respondent pool consisted of only 18 school leaders. The small number of respondents can be explained in that CAISA is NEASC’s youngest Commission and therefore has a smaller membership base than the other Commissions. Despite a small sample, CAISA results reveal that international schools derive even greater benefits from participation in accreditation than do New England (NE)-based K-12 accredited schools. Moreover, the qualitative results indicate that international school leaders perceive similar (and often, even greater) positive impacts that result from participation in accreditation as do their counterparts at accredited schools in New England.

The quantitative results of the international school survey demonstrate that, like the NE-based K-12 school leaders surveyed, most international school leaders affirm that accreditation has led to improvements in instruction, professional development, academic and work environment, professional development, and staff communication and teamwork. Specifically, the vast majority of respondents (17 of 18) agreed that participation in accreditation enhanced the overall quality of education at their school. More than three-quarter of respondents (15 of 18) believed participation in accreditation led to improvements in institutional leadership.

The majority of international school respondents (17 of 18) agree that they would worry that the quality of education of member (international) schools would deteriorate absent accreditation. Most respondents (17 of 18) also
agree that participation in accreditation has resulted in better staff communication at their school and over three-quarters of these respondents (14 of 18) feel that the accreditation process led to more teamwork among staff. Most international school respondents (15 of 18) credit improvements in institutional leadership to participation in the accreditation process.

Results of the qualitative section of the international school survey further corroborate other K-12 survey results. When asked how accreditation impacted their schools’ quality of education, international school leaders, like their surveyed peers in New England, report that accreditation prompted improvements to institutional effectiveness, instruction and teamwork. Broadly speaking, international school respondents report (from most to least frequently cited) that accreditation has impacted the quality of education at their schools as it:

1. Enabled school to identify strengths and weaknesses (cited by 44%);
2. Improved instruction (cited by 38%);
3. Led to greater staff teamwork and collegiality (cited by 25%);
4. Improved organizational effectiveness and long-term planning (cited by 19%);
5. Improved school resources (cited by 19%)
6. Improved professional development (cited by 13%);
7. Made school accountable (cited by 13%);
8. Increased community support for school initiatives (cited by 13%);
9. Led to better staffing decisions (cited by 13%) and
10. Raised staff morale (cited by 6%).

The comments of international school respondents are similar to those found in the K-12 responses. For example, international school respondents often note that the self-study forced an introspective and systematic assessment of their school which had precipitated comprehensive school-wide improvements. Both groups report that accreditation has engendered positive change by providing focus, direction and validation of effective practices in place. Furthermore, respondents from both groups comment that the requirement to document findings from the self-study established the condition and mindset for forwarding goals and taking action decisively.

Like their counterparts in New England, international school respondents indicate that the accreditation process has impacted on school resources. The proportion of international school respondents and NE-based K-12 respondents claiming that accreditation is important in terms of improving the quality of school resources, including technology, library and multimedia resources, is similar: 71% of international school respondents and 75% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents report that accreditation has improved the quality of their school’s resources. Similar to responses of New England-
Results of the Regional Accreditation and the Quality of Education Survey, NEASC 2005

Based K-12 respondents, international school respondents report that accreditation primarily impacts school resources as it: (1) identifies needs (in terms of school resources); (2) helps schools plan and budget for resources in the long-term; (3) helps schools use existing resources more efficiently, and (4) justifies needs (regarding resources) to the community.

There is scant research on international schools and instructional issues. International school survey results are analyzed separately from K-12 survey results, to gauge similarities in the ways that accreditation compared to K-12 schools in New England,

Unexpectedly, findings from the international school pilot survey indicate that despite differences between accredited K-12 schools in New England and accredited international schools in different nations, there are more similarities in terms of the ways that accreditation affects the quality of education at NEASC-accredited schools. The qualitative findings, in particular, indicate that similar factors at schools are consistently affected by accreditation across institution types and even geographical regions of the world. It appears that the factors affected by accreditation are ones which have both direct and indirect positive impacts on the quality of education.

As with their surveyed peers in New England, international school respondents and K-12 survey respondents reported that accreditation has been important in terms of improving the quality of school resources at their school—71% of international school respondents and 75% of K-12 survey respondents reported that participation in the accreditation process led to improvements in the quality of school resources, including technology, library and multimedia resources.

While initially we did not know if international school leaders would respond similarly as their NE peers, the qualitative results indicate that despite differences between accredited K-12 schools in NE and accredited international schools, the survey finds that there are more similarities in the ways that accreditation impacts the quality of education across institution types and even across geographical regions of the world. Similarly, school-level factors are consistently affected by participation in the accreditation process. For instance, both K-12 and international school survey results show that participation in the accreditation process most profoundly affects schools by prompting improvements in instruction and institutional effectiveness (organization, management, strategic and long-term planning, leadership and budgeting).
The results of the preliminary study on international schools provide a basis for future research and signal that much can be learned about best practices in international schools through insights from school leaders.

3.0 Higher Education Survey Respondents

The higher education survey was sent to the third group of respondents from accredited higher education institutions. A total of 75 accredited higher education institutions had team evaluation visits since 2002. Heads of these institutions were sent surveys and 35 individuals responded. Although the sample was small compared to the K-12 survey respondents, feedback from the higher education respondents was informative and enlightening.

Quantitative results of the higher education survey reveal that the vast majority of respondents among NEASC member colleges and universities believe that accreditation has positively impacted the quality of education at their institution. For instance, 97% of higher education survey respondents (34 of 35) agree that “accreditation fulfilled the function of promoting quality at their institution.” All 35 or 100% of respondents believe that “accreditation fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of education” and 97% of respondents (34 of 35) agree that “participation in accreditation was useful to faculty and staff” at their institution. Over two-thirds or 67% of respondents affirm that “participation in accreditation helped their governing board understand their institution’s mission and programs.” In addition, results show that two-thirds of respondents (29 of 35) believe that “the accreditation process motivates their institution to focus more on assessment of student learning” while 82% agree that “the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.” All 35 or 100% of respondents believe their institution was fairly evaluated and 100% agree that “the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough.”

Like the K-12 respondents, higher education respondents responded to open-ended questions. They were asked to describe the greatest strengths of the accreditation process. Overall, the qualitative results of the higher education survey reveal that respondents representing accredited higher education institutions place the greatest value on the peer-review and self-study processes. These respondents report that the greatest strengths of the accreditation process (listed from most frequently cited to least frequently cited) are:
1. Peer-review  
2. Self-study  
3. More effective planning  
4. Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community  
5. Enabling effective assessment of strengths and weaknesses  
6. The Standards for Accreditation  
7. Accountability (public assurance and quality assurance)  
8. Thoroughness

In their answers, higher education respondents often comment that as leaders, they find peer-review beneficial because this process provides exposure to colleagues who give them objective and practical feedback. The self-study process is also greatly valued because it leads institutions to analyze all their programs and operations systematically and thoroughly. The process also increases the focus on long-term planning and fosters collaboration and communication between departments and groups within an institution. Thus, the accreditation process was seen to prompt more effective planning.

In conclusion, the NEASC survey results offer valuable insights about the ways that the accreditation process impacts accredited schools ranging from public to private K-12 schools to international schools and higher education institutions. The results suggest that at all grade levels and at different types of schools including small and large schools and schools which vary in per student spending and resources, factors such as strategic short- and long-term planning, staff and faculty collaboration, effective self-evaluations aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses, peer-review, parental involvement, teaching practices geared toward student-centered instruction and hands-on learning, all impact the quality of education and are, according to the vast majority of surveyed school leaders, the key positive outcomes resulting from participation in accreditation. The results are also meaningful to the extent that previously, scant attention or research has been done on different types of schools. In fact, few studies have examined the relationship between organizational practices or institutional effectiveness and quality of education. Lastly, the direct insights from school leaders in our survey underscores that there is much knowledge that can be gained by providing opportunities to every day education practitioners to voice their opinions and share experiences. In this way, we hope the findings in this report will encourage more studies incorporating qualitative and quantitative analyses in order that they may inform best practices in education.
Summary of Findings
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The current debate surrounding best practices in education has spawned a number of research studies which identify factors that enhance student learning and promote institutional effectiveness. Some of these factors include: quality of classroom teachers; degree of staff communication and teamwork; school climate; range of professional development training for teachers and staff; the selection and design of curriculum content; the variety of instructional inputs for students with disabilities, limited English proficiency or other special learning needs; degree of student-centered instruction employed in classrooms; the rigor of the academic program; and degree to which the administration and faculty engage in collaborative decision-making. For decades, NEASC accreditation has greatly influenced these factors in New England’s educational institutions. NEASC accreditation standards are purposefully broad so that they may apply to numerous and different institutions. A longstanding strength of the accreditation process has been its versatility, that is, its applicability among a broad range of institutions, each with specific and varied values and objectives dictated by the community it serves.

This report, based on findings from a survey completed by 279 of 581 potential K-16 leaders among NEASC-accredited institutions, demonstrates clearly that accreditation has a significant and positive impact on educational institutions of all types and grade-levels, though no two institutions are impacted in exactly the same way.

The NEASC study sought to gather measurable insights about the impact of accreditation on the quality of education at member institutions, which include public and independent elementary, middle and secondary schools, technical and career schools, higher education institutions and international schools worldwide. In order to gain a more extensive understanding of what constitutes quality education, NEASC queried school leaders, recognizing that institutions differ in characteristics such as in student demographics and institutional resources which inevitably factor into the opinions conveyed by respondents. The study also intended to determine if school leaders perceive the impact of accreditation on the quality of education as one which is short-range, long-range or both, while examining differences across Commissions and institution types.

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5. Improved school resources (cited by 19%)
6. Improved professional development (cited by 13%);
7. Made school accountable (cited by 13%);
8. Increased community support for school initiatives (cited by 13%);
9. Led to better staffing decisions (cited by 13%) and
10. Raised staff morale (cited by 6%).

The comments of international school respondents are similar to those found in the K-12 responses. For example, international school respondents often note that the self-study forced an introspective and systematic assessment of their school which had precipitated comprehensive school-wide improvements. Both groups report that accreditation has engendered positive change by providing focus, direction and validation of effective practices in place. Furthermore, respondents from both groups comment that the requirement to document findings from the self-study established the condition and mindset for forwarding goals and taking action decisively.

Like their counterparts in New England, international school respondents indicate that the accreditation process has impacted on school resources. The proportion of international school respondents and NE-based K-12 respondents claiming that accreditation is important in terms of improving the quality of school resources, including technology, library and multimedia resources, is similar: 71% of international school respondents and 75% of NE-based K-12 survey respondents report that accreditation has improved the quality of their school’s resources. Similar to responses of New England-
based K-12 respondents, international school respondents report that accreditation primarily impacts school resources as it: (1) identifies needs (in terms of school resources); (2) helps schools plan and budget for resources in the long-term; (3) helps schools use existing resources more efficiently, and (4) justifies needs (regarding resources) to the community.

There is scant research on international schools and instructional issues. International school survey results are analyzed separately from K-12 survey results, to gauge similarities in the ways that accreditation compared to K-12 schools in New England,

Unexpectedly, findings from the international school pilot survey indicate that despite differences between accredited K-12 schools in New England and accredited international schools in different nations, there are more similarities in terms of the ways that accreditation affects the quality of education at NEASC-accredited schools. The qualitative findings, in particular, indicate that similar factors at schools are consistently affected by accreditation across institution types and even geographical regions of the world. It appears that the factors affected by accreditation are ones which have both direct and indirect positive impacts on the quality of education.

As with their surveyed peers in New England, international school respondents and K-12 survey respondents reported that accreditation has been important in terms of improving the quality of school resources at their school—71% of international school respondents and 75% of K-12 survey respondents reported that participation in the accreditation process led to improvements in the quality of school resources, including technology, library and multimedia resources.

While initially we did not know if international school leaders would respond similarly as their NE peers, the qualitative results indicate that despite differences between accredited K-12 schools in NE and accredited international schools, the survey finds that there are more similarities in the ways that accreditation impacts the quality of education across institution types and even across geographical regions of the world. Similarly, school-level factors are consistently affected by participation in the accreditation process. For instance, both K-12 and international school survey results show that participation in the accreditation process most profoundly affects schools by prompting improvements in instruction and institutional effectiveness (organization, management, strategic and long-term planning, leadership and budgeting).
The results of the preliminary study on international schools provide a basis for future research and signal that much can be learned about best practices in international schools through insights from school leaders.

### 3.0 Higher Education Survey Respondents

The higher education survey was sent to the third group of respondents from accredited higher education institutions. A total of 75 accredited higher education institutions had team evaluation visits since 2002. Heads of these institutions were sent surveys and 35 individuals responded. Although the sample was small compared to the K-12 survey respondents, feedback from the higher education respondents was informative and enlightening.

Quantitative results of the higher education survey reveal that the vast majority of respondents among NEASC member colleges and universities believe that accreditation has positively impacted the quality of education at their institution. For instance, 97% of higher education survey respondents (34 of 35) agree that “accreditation fulfilled the function of promoting quality at their institution.” All 35 or 100% of respondents believe that “accreditation fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of education” and 97% of respondents (34 of 35) agree that “participation in accreditation was useful to faculty and staff” at their institution. Over two-thirds or 67% of respondents affirm that “participation in accreditation helped their governing board understand their institution’s mission and programs.” In addition, results show that two-thirds of respondents (29 of 35) believe that “the accreditation process motivates their institution to focus more on assessment of student learning” while 82% agree that “the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.” All 35 or 100% of respondents believe their institution was fairly evaluated and 100% agree that “the visiting team’s recommendations were valid and thorough.”

Like the K-12 respondents, higher education respondents responded to open-ended questions. They were asked to describe the greatest strengths of the accreditation process. Overall, the qualitative results of the higher education survey reveal that respondents representing accredited higher education institutions place the greatest value on the peer-review and self-study processes. These respondents report that the greatest strengths of the accreditation process (listed from most frequently cited to least frequently cited) are:
1. Peer-review
2. Self-study
3. More effective planning
4. Encouraging collaboration and unifying campus community
5. Enabling effective assessment of strengths and weaknesses
6. The Standards for Accreditation
7. Accountability (public assurance and quality assurance)
8. Thoroughness

In their answers, higher education respondents often comment that as leaders, they find peer-review beneficial because this process provides exposure to colleagues who give them objective and practical feedback. The self-study process is also greatly valued because it leads institutions to analyze all their programs and operations systematically and thoroughly. The process also increases the focus on long-term planning and fosters collaboration and communication between departments and groups within an institution. Thus, the accreditation process was seen to prompt more effective planning.

In conclusion, the NEASC survey results offer valuable insights about the ways that the accreditation process impacts accredited schools ranging from public to private K-12 schools to international schools and higher education institutions. The results suggest that at all grade levels and at different types of schools including small and large schools and schools which vary in per student spending and resources, factors such as strategic short- and long-term planning, staff and faculty collaboration, effective self-evaluations aimed at identifying strengths and weaknesses, peer-review, parental involvement, teaching practices geared toward student-centered instruction and hands-on learning, all impact the quality of education and are, according to the vast majority of surveyed school leaders, the key positive outcomes resulting from participation in accreditation. The results are also meaningful to the extent that previously, scant attention or research has been done on different types of schools. In fact, few studies have examined the relationship between organizational practices or institutional effectiveness and quality of education. Lastly, the direct insights from school leaders in our survey underscores that there is much knowledge that can be gained by providing opportunities to every day education practitioners to voice their opinions and share experiences. In this way, we hope the findings in this report will encourage more studies incorporating qualitative and quantitative analyses in order that they may inform best practices in education.
Appendices:

Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey

Appendix A.2: International School Survey

Appendix A.3: Higher Education Survey
Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey
Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey

Part 1

Directions: Please indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by checking the box that most accurately matches your feelings. The number marked on the last page of the survey is only for statistical purposes. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Not Certain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The accreditation process has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education at my institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.</td>
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<td>3. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.</td>
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<td>4. The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.</td>
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<td>5. Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff.</td>
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<td>6. The accreditation process is considered by most of the staff to be necessary for ensuring educational quality.</td>
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<td>7. The level of the quality of education in New England would be unchanged if member institutions as a whole never participated in accreditation.</td>
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<td>8. The standards set by the Commission are realistic.</td>
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<td>9. The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.</td>
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<td>10. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in student academic achievement.</td>
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### Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey

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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the <em>work</em> environment for the staff.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my institution.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and management of my institution.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Meeting standards is difficult for my institution given its resources.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>The accreditation process is too time-intensive for my staff.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>The benefits of the accreditation process are more readily seen in the long-term rather than in the short-term.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>I believe accreditation affects school improvement in <em>both</em> the short-term and the long-term.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>My institution was fairly evaluated.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>The Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>The members of the visiting team were experienced and qualified to evaluate my institution.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>My institution was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>My institution has the resources to follow through with the changes related to meeting the standards set by the Commission.</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>The majority of my institution’s staff participated in preparing for the accreditation visit in some way.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement at my institution.</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in New England.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>The accreditation process has led to improvements in institutional leadership.</td>
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</table>
Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey

Directions: For each statement below, please check the box that most accurately describes your opinions about the degree of impact (great, slight, none, or not certain) that the accreditation process has had at your institution.

1. How much of an impact has accreditation had on the physical environment, including classroom environment and facilities, at your institution?

2. How much impact does the physical environment of an institution have on student learning?

3. How much of an impact does the accreditation process have on staff morale?

CONTINUED⇒
Part 3 Directions: Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Please be as honest as possible. You may continue on a separate paper if you need additional space. Your feedback and comments are very important to us.

1. How has participation in the accreditation process impacted the quality of education at your institution? Please provide any specific examples you can think of:

2. How important is the accreditation process in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies, including technology, library, and multimedia supplies?

3. Can you describe what you believe are the greatest strengths of this process?
Appendix A.1: K-12 Survey

4. What needs to be improved about the accreditation process?

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5. Any other comments?

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General Information: For research purposes, please answer the questions below pertaining to your background and your institution’s characteristics. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential.

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<tr>
<th>Type of institution (please circle):</th>
<th>Public</th>
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<tr>
<td>Level of education (please circle):</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
<td>2-Year College or University</td>
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<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4-Year College or University</td>
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Your position at your institution: ____________________________ Number of years in this position: ________

Number of students at your institution: ________ Grades: ________

Your Gender: F M
Appendix A.2: International School Survey

Part 1

Directions: Please indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by checking the box that most accurately matches your feelings. The number marked on the last page of the survey is only for statistical purposes. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Not Certain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The accreditation process has been beneficial in terms of enhancing the overall quality of education at my institution.</td>
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<td>2. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the quality of classroom instruction.</td>
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<td>3. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.</td>
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<td>4. The accreditation process has resulted in better staff communication.</td>
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<td>5. Participation in the accreditation process has led to more teamwork among staff.</td>
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<td>6. The accreditation process is considered by most of the staff to be necessary for ensuring educational quality.</td>
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<td>7. The level of the quality of education in American and international schools would be unchanged if member institutions as a whole never participated in accreditation.</td>
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<td>8. The standards set by the Commission will help improve teaching and learning at my institution.</td>
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<td>9. The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.</td>
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<td>10. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in student academic achievement.</td>
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NEASC fax #: **US COUNTRY CODE + 1 + (781) 271-0950**
Appendix A.2: International School Survey

11. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment, including the classroom and non-classroom environment, for students.

12. Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the staff.

13. The accreditation process affects the quality of education at my institution on an ongoing basis and not just during the time of on-site visits.

14. Participation in the accreditation process has improved organization and management of my institution.

15. Meeting standards is difficult for my institution given its resources.

16. Preparing for the accreditation visit is too time-intensive for my staff.

17. The benefits of the accreditation process are more readily seen in the long-term rather than in the short-term.

18. I believe accreditation affects school improvement in both the short-term and the long-term.

19. My institution was fairly evaluated.

20. The Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.
Appendix A.2: International School Survey

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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>The members of the visiting team were experienced and qualified to evaluate my institution.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>My institution was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>My institution has the resources to follow through with the changes related to meeting the standards set by the Commission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>The majority of my institution’s staff participated in preparing for the accreditation visit in some way.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement at my institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement in international schools overall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I would worry that the educational quality of member institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in American/international schools abroad.</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>The accreditation process has led to improvements in institutional leadership.</td>
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Appendix A.2: International School Survey

Part 2

Directions: For each statement below, please check the box that most accurately describes your opinions about the degree of impact (great, slight, none, or not certain) that the accreditation process has had at your institution.

1. How much of an impact has accreditation had on the physical environment, including classroom environment and facilities, at your institution?

2. How much impact does the physical environment of an institution have on student learning?

3. How much of an impact does the accreditation process have on staff morale?

CONTINUED ➔
Part 3 Directions: Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Please be as honest as possible. You may continue on a separate paper if you need additional space. Your feedback and comments are very important to us.

1. How has participation in the accreditation process impacted the quality of education at your institution? Please provide any specific examples you can think of.

________________________________________________________________________
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2. How important is the accreditation process in terms of improving the quality of school resources and supplies, including technology, library, and multimedia supplies?

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3. Can you describe what you believe are the greatest strengths of the accreditation process?

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Appendix A.2: International School Survey

4. What needs to be improved about the accreditation process?

________________________________________________________________________
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5. Any other comments?

________________________________________________________________________
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General Information: For research purposes, please answer the questions below pertaining to your background and your institution’s characteristics. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential.

Type of institution (please circle):  **Public**  **Private**  **Other:**

Country (optional): ______________________

Your position at your institution:  ________________  Number of years in this position: _________

Number of students at your institution: _________  Grades: _________

Your Gender:  **F**  **M**
Appendix A.3:
Higher Education Survey
Appendix A.3: Higher Education Survey

Directions: Please indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by checking the box that most accurately matches your feelings. The number marked on the last page of the survey is only for statistical purposes. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

Part 1

1. The accreditation process fulfilled the function of providing public assurance of the quality of my institution.

2. The accreditation process fulfilled the function of promoting quality at my institution.

3. Participation in the accreditation process was useful to faculty and staff at my institution.

4. The accreditation process helped clarify important strengths and concerns of the institution.

5. The accreditation process helped my institution gain momentum on addressing significant issues related to the Standards.

6. The accreditation process motivates my institution to focus more on assessment of student learning.

7. The level of the quality of education in New England would be unchanged if member institutions as a whole never participated in accreditation.

8. The standards set by the Commission are realistic.

9. The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.

10. The accreditation process helped us focus more productively on planning.
### Appendix A.3: Higher Education Survey

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<td>11. Meeting accreditation standards is difficult for my institution given its resources.</td>
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<td>12. The accreditation process is too time-intensive for my institution.</td>
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<td>13. The benefits of the accreditation process are more readily seen in the long-term rather than in the short-term.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I believe accreditation affects institutional improvement in <em>both</em> the short-term and the long-term.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. My institution was fairly evaluated.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The Commission provided sufficient guidance and support following the accreditation visit.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The members of the visiting team were experienced and qualified to evaluate my institution.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My institution was adequately trained on how to prepare for an accreditation visit.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My institution has the resources to follow through with the changes related to meeting the standards set by the Commission.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvement <em>in New England</em>.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. I would worry that the educational quality of higher education institutions would deteriorate if the accreditation process were to end in New England.

22. Participation in the accreditation process helped our governing board understand the institution’s mission and academic programs.

Part 2 Directions: Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Please be as honest as possible. You may continue on a separate paper if you need additional space. Your feedback and comments are very important to us.

1. Can you describe what you believe are the greatest strengths of the accreditation process?

2. What needs to be improved about the accreditation process?
Appendix A.3: Higher Education Survey

3. Any other comments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Information: For research purposes, please answer the questions below pertaining to your background and your institution’s characteristics. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Type of institution (please circle):**  **Public**  **Independent**

**Highest degree awarded at your institution (please circle):**  **Associate’s**  **Bachelor’s**  **Master’s**  **First Professional**  **Doctorate**

**Number of FTE students enrolled at your institution:**  ________

**Your position at your institution:**  ________________  **Number of years in this position:**  ________

**Your Gender:**  **F**  **M**