



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
Commission on Independent Schools

Accreditation Standards

Mission Statement

To assure the positive and equitable development of all students, inspire creativity, foster excellence and promote institutional well-being, NEASC Accreditation engages schools in aspirational, mission-driven self-study and peer review.

All accreditation materials are available for download on our website:
www.neasc.org/independent

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Foundation Standards

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Strategic Planning Standard

Standard 14: Commitment to Long-Term Viability and Innovation Guides Planning

Foundation Standards and Indicators

1. Enrolled Students Align Appropriately with the Mission

- 1.a. The Mission is demonstrably appropriate for each student in the school.
- 1.b. The enrollment process aligns with the Mission and values of the school.
- 1.c. The school identifies and addresses current enrollment trends and challenges.
- 1.d. The school articulates its “value proposition” in light of enrollment, Mission and societal trends.
- 1.e. If applicable, the school understands and addresses boarding/homestay trends.
- 1.f. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current Marketing/Enrollment Plan
- B. Current printed admissions materials and/or link to online site
- C. Student/parent contract(s)
- D. Statement of Financial Aid policies and procedures
- E. Non-discrimination Policy (may be included in other materials). NEASC requires all students to be treated fairly and equitably. The missions of independent schools may be gender-specific.
- F. Parent and Student Handbooks

2. The Governing Body/Board Assures the School Remains Sustainable and True to its Mission

- 2.a. With consideration of ‘best practices’, the Governing Body/Board understands and carries out its responsibilities including overseeing:
- Mission
 - Value Proposition/Educational quality
 - Fiscal integrity
 - Appropriate support for the Head of School
 - Continuous Planning, always with a three-to-five-year horizon
- 2.b. The Governing Body/Board effectively assesses its governance practices.
- 2.c. The Governing Body/Board manages its own leadership transition effectively.
- 2.d. The Governing Body/Board uses effective policies and procedures to identify, select and mentor new members.
- 2.e. The Governing Body/Board seeks balanced membership representing the diversity of the community and key areas of expertise, interest and abilities.
- 2.f. The Governing Body/Board accurately identifies and addresses significant issues affecting the school’s future.
- 2.g. The Governing Body/Board appropriately and effectively communicates decisions and actions to the school community.
- 2.h. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current Governing Body/Board roster indicating length of service
- B. Current By-Laws
- C. Minutes of two recent meetings
- D. Governing Body/Board Self-Evaluation Instrument
- E. Head Evaluation Process/Instrument
- F. Corporate Status as a tax-exempt institution, if applicable
- G. Conflict of Interest Policy for Board members

3. The School's Resources Sufficiently Support Present and Prospective Operation

- 3.a. The school preserves, manages and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support and advance its Mission.
- 3.b. Tuition and other revenue adequately sustain the school's financial viability.
- 3.c. The school accurately identifies current and long-term financial realities and challenges and has a capacity to respond to fiscal emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.
- 3.d. The school's facilities appropriately support the students and programs.
- 3.e. The school undertakes appropriate and effective facilities planning to address needed, intended and/or desired improvements and maintenance.
- 3.f. Technology infrastructure adequately supports both the educational program and institutional operation.
- 3.g. The school's development/advancement program identifies short and long-term goals and strives to achieve them.
- 3.h. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

(These financial documents are confidential and, as such, should be sent to the NEASC office prior to the Foundation Visit. Our office will contact you regarding the submission of these documents.)

- A. The school must provide ONE of the following at the time of the Five-Year Interim Evaluation Report and at the Foundation Visit (presented in order of preference and dependent upon the school's resources):
 - Opinion Audit
 - Reviewed Financial Statements with Management Letter
 - If a Catholic School, a Diocesan Review of School Finances
- B. Annual Budget for most recently completed year (prior to Foundation Visit)
- C. Written Financial Plan including Three to Five-Year Projection
- D. Report summarizing annual giving/voluntary support for most recently completed year
- E. Insurance policies/plans
- F. Salary table for full-time faculty listing only the low, median and high salary
- G. List of Benefits

4. The School Assures that the Adult Community is Qualified and Organized to Implement the Mission

- 4.a. The faculty and staff are demonstrably qualified to carry out their duties.
- 4.b. There are sufficient numbers of qualified faculty and staff to support the Mission of the school.
- 4.c. The faculty and staff are properly organized to implement the Mission.
- 4.d. Personnel and hiring policies and procedures effectively and ethically ensure that all employees can support the school's Mission and culture.
- 4.e. The school has specific, inviolable procedures to check the legal and professional background of all employees and of the other adults who may come into regular contact with students.
- 4.f. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current employee roster, including roles and responsibilities, length of service and professional qualifications
- B. Organizational chart(s) and/or protocols setting out lines of communication and areas of responsibility
- C. Examples of each type of faculty/staff/administrative contract
- D. For the Chair of the Visiting Committee and NEASC Staff only: Confidential Salary Documentation
- E. Faculty Handbook(s)
- F. Faculty Code of Conduct or similar document (if separate from E above)
- G. List of materials consistently maintained in personnel files

5. A Proactive Culture of Health and Safety Permeates the School

- 5.a. The school's culture of health and safety reflects the intentions of the *NEASC/CIS Health and Safety Considerations*.
- 5.b. In its annual review of the *NEASC/CIS Health and Safety Considerations*, the school has a process in place to accurately and regularly identify and address any area(s) warranting immediate and/or long-term attention.
- 5.c. School leadership clearly and specifically cultivates a culture of health and safety within the entire school community.
- 5.d. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current Crisis Management Plan/Protocols including up-to-date communications and contact information.
- B. Compliance Documentation including:
 - Current fire inspections for each facility
 - Food Service certification (i.e., cleanliness, safe-handling, health inspection)
 - Medical facility inspection as required (state and local requirements vary)
 - As required by state or locale, any additional necessary testing (i.e., water at tap, radon, asbestos, carbon monoxide)
 - Schedule of fire drills and lockdown/campus emergency and safety activity – both completed for the most recent year and planned for the current one
 - Documentation around individual activities where specialized health and safety considerations are necessary (i.e., waterfront and pool areas, sports practices and games, field trips and off-campus trips, international travel and immunizations)
 - Policy on acquisition of current student health records
 - Statement from the Head of School that the school's Emergency Plan is complete and has been submitted to the appropriate local officials
 - State compliance documentation for programs serving students under the age of three (if applicable)

Note: To determine compliance with local, state and federal health and safety requirements, schools must consult legal counsel. NEASC Accreditation does NOT provide indemnification nor explicit or implied approval for any school activity, program or facility. The Visiting Committee or NEASC Staff Visit and Report are peer reviews only and not legal documentation. NEASC written or verbal communication never substitutes for or replaces local, state or federal legal requirements.

6. Proprietary Schools Ensure Effective Leadership, Clear Organizational Structure, and the Necessary Resources to Successfully Execute the Mission of the School for the Foreseeable Future (*Note: This Standard applies to for-profit schools only. Not-for-profit schools need not respond.*)

- 6.a. The owner and governing body share the values and Mission of the school and are committed to long-term growth.
- 6.b. The owner/governing body establishes and maintains policy-making processes with provisions for the participation of all stakeholders, as appropriate.
- 6.c. The school establishes and follows policies applicable to ownership that address conflicts of interest and provide protection against malfeasance by persons exercising control over the school.
- 6.d. There is a clear description for legal and tax purposes of the school's form of organization, and a clear organizational chart that defines the roles and responsibilities of the school's owner/governing body, administration, faculty and staff.
- 6.e. One person is designated as the chief administrator (Head, Principal, President, etc.) of the school; this person may be the owner.
- 6.f. The designated chief administrator is evaluated on an annual basis.
- 6.g. The Governing Body/Board includes members who represent the public interest, who have no contractual, employment or personal financial interest in the institution. Public representatives should be free from present or potential conflict of interest.
- 6.h. The school has a provision for thoughtful, deliberate and transparent leadership transition. This is particularly important when the school leader and school owner are the same person.

Required Materials:

(These financial documents are confidential and, as such, should be sent separately to the Chair of the visit and to the NEASC office prior to the Foundation Visit.)

The school should have an outside third party (auditor) write a letter speaking specifically to the following two aspects of the school:

- 1. Reasonable assurance that the school has the assets available to sustain operation of the school for the foreseeable future (which include a current asset-to-liability ratio).
- 2. Assurances that the school has the systems in place to manage its finances appropriately.

This could include:

- Tax Returns for the organization, or its parent company or owner, for the most

recent fiscal year

- Internal Trial Balance for most recently closed fiscal year

An annual audit (see below) is the best way to secure information in both areas.

- Should this involve a Parent Corporation, this corporation can give the school a copy of its annual audited statement for the corporation, and then separate financial documents (budget, P&L, etc.) for the school itself. Occasionally, schools are audited independent of the Parent Corporation.
- Should the Parent Corporation refuse to submit an audit, it must provide a letter from its auditor assuring that the school appropriately addresses the concerns noted above about the school.

Accreditation through the Commission on Independent Schools is granted expressly to a particular institution with clearly defined and identified ownership and/or control. A change in ownership or control automatically results in a self-executing, immediate discontinuance of accreditation unless the new owner or controlling authority provides adequate written assurance and evidence that the standards of the Commission will be maintained. Such assurances will be validated by a Focused Review Committee appointed by the Commission to visit the institution at a time designated by the Commission.

Program Standards and Indicators

7. Commitment to Mission and Core Beliefs Informs Decisions, Guides Initiatives and Aligns with the Students' Needs and Aspirations

- 7.a. Mission permeates the school's culture and climate.
- 7.b. The school annually assesses the Mission's relevance.
- 7.c. The school effectively communicates the Mission to faculty, students, families and the larger community.
- 7.d. Internal and external communications genuinely reflect the Mission and Core Values.
- 7.e. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current Mission Statement
- B. Other guiding documents if applicable:
 - Statement of Core Values/Beliefs/Philosophy
 - Statement of Vision
 - Value Proposition

8. Commitment to Inspiration and Support Characterizes the Approach to Each Student

- 8.a. Students learn the personal qualities necessary to achieve independence and develop confidence.
- 8.b. The school recognizes, values and nurtures the unique reality of every student at each stage of his/her development.
- 8.c. School culture promotes and celebrates the essential equity and inclusion of all students.
- 8.d. The faculty regularly monitors each student's social and emotional development.
- 8.e. Students' perspectives and opinions are appropriately heard and addressed.
- 8.f. Students and parents as necessary can access support to address their respective needs.
- 8.g. Students are encouraged to engage actively in the life of the school.
- 8.h. The school strives to understand and respond to the realities of students' social and emotional experiences within and outside the school.
- 8.i. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. School Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey (if appropriate and/or completed; many instruments assess student and faculty culture; NEASC asks that schools choose one appropriate to their Mission)
- B. Documentation describing specific services, programs or activities such as:
 - Learning Support services
 - Language Support services
 - Counseling and guidance support services
 - Testing and placement – courses, programs, college application
 - Other programs specific to the school

9. Commitment to Excellence Distinguishes the Program

- 9.a. The school's culture nurtures and promotes excellence in each component of the program.
- 9.b. The program consistently reflects the Mission.
- 9.c. Curriculum planning supports the school's core beliefs and the needs of the students.
- 9.d. Written curriculum aligns horizontally and vertically.
- 9.e. Faculty regularly discuss and demonstrably seek to implement the most effective curriculum.
- 9.f. Current curriculum content and pedagogical research informs the program and instructional practices.
- 9.g. Media and technology resource services support the program and meet the needs of the students and faculty.
- 9.h. Faculty use formative and summative assessment appropriately to promote learning and monitor growth.
- 9.i. The program supports a range of learning styles and developmental levels.
- 9.j. Every aspect of the program reflects awareness of and commitment to equity, justice and inclusion.
- 9.k. The school's international programs or partnerships (if applicable) are aligned with the school's Mission and meet the needs of all engaged in or affected by them.
- 9.l. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current written curriculum/curriculum guide
- B. List/examples of assessment tools/methods demonstrating student progress
- C. Documentation detailing any specific provisions for international students

10. Commitment to Continuous Professional Development Permeates the Adult Culture

- 10.a. The school values and encourages research, reflection and innovation.
- 10.b. The school fosters positive relationships and thoughtful professional collaboration.
- 10.c. Successful professional development planning aligns the needs of the school and the individual teachers at all career stages.
- 10.d. The school's leadership and faculty participate in NEASC peer review visits.
- 10.e. The school's professional evaluation and assessment of all personnel assures effective implementation of their responsibilities.
- 10.f. School personnel understand their decision-making roles and responsibilities.
- 10.g. Lines of authority and communication are clear and effective.
- 10.h. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. List of effective and completed professional development opportunities provided to faculty and staff for the past three years
- B. List of current faculty, administration and staff who have participated in NEASC Visiting Teams in the past five years
- C. Evaluation/assessment documents/protocols for faculty, administration and staff

11. Commitment to Engaging with the Greater Community Enhances Student Experience

- 11.a. The school effectively communicates and collaborates with families around their children's development.
- 11.b. The school and the local community interact to their mutual benefit.
- 11.c. The school effectively engages with its alumni and friends.
- 11.d. The school is committed to broadening students' perspectives.
- 11.e. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Examples of communication with alums and parents

12. Commitment to Meeting the Needs of Each Student Drives the Residential Program

- 12.a. The Residential Program is consistent with the Mission of the school.
- 12.b. Residential staff are appropriately qualified and assigned to meet the needs of students under their care and supervision.
- 12.c. The Residential Program, including evening, weekend and vacation activities is integrated into the total life of the school and promotes appropriate interaction with day students.
- 12.d. The school provides for the needs of a wide range of students.
- 12.e. The residential spaces include technology infrastructure and support and ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with the school's overall technology plan and acceptable use policy.
- 12.f. There are clearly stated, written, and understood expectations for residential students and staff.
- 12.g. Students are included periodically in planning and developing policies, expectations and programs.
- 12.h. Residential staff are appropriately housed in ways which enhance the experience of the students, faculty and families.
- 12.i. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Residential Student Handbook (if separate from Student Handbook)
- B. Faculty or staff materials specific to the Residential Program
- C. Copy of weekend activities calendar

13. Commitment to the Health and Well-Being of Each Student Guides the School's Homestay Program

- 13.a. The school is ultimately responsible for the health and well-being of each homestay student and assigns appropriate school personnel to assure their welfare.
- 13.b. The Homestay Program is consistent with the Mission of the school.
- 13.c. The school has a formal understanding with homestay families if there is a direct placement or with an agency that provides homestay placements. This understanding should detail the ethical and legal responsibilities of the school, the host families and the students.
- 13.d. The school can assure that homestay facilities are safe and clean and provide sufficient and appropriate living space.
- 13.e. There is a clearly defined process in place to assure appropriate screening of host families including background checks, and a process for matching student and family interests.
- 13.f. The school has clearly stated, written, and understood expectations for the school, host families, and students regarding the student academic program and experiences both during the school week and on weekends and vacations, and these expectations and responsibilities are published and disseminated in a school handbook.
- 13.g. The school has a well-defined process to include students, host families and appropriate school personnel to regularly review the Homestay Program and the experience of the students.
- 13.h. The school has procedures in place to integrate international and other students living in homestay situations into the school's social and academic fabric.
- 13.i. Students are included periodically in planning and developing policies, expectations, and programs.
- 13.j. The school ensures that homestay students have a family experience and their social and personal lives outside of school are both safe and rewarding.
- 13.k. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Agency contract
- B. International Student/Family Handbook

Strategic Planning Standard and Indicators

14. Commitment to Long-Term Viability and Innovation Guides Planning

- 14.a. The school engages in thoughtful, realistic, thorough and continuous planning.
- 14.b. The school conducts research and collects data to inform planning.
- 14.c. Goals and plans are appropriately adjusted in light of actual experience and unanticipated realities.
- 14.d. The school clearly identifies challenges that must be addressed to insure sustainability.
- 14.e. The school possesses the capacity, competence and commitment to effect its goals.
- 14.f. The school considers issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in its planning.
- 14.g. The school celebrates accomplishments and programs contributing to identity and legacy.
- 14.h. The school's written Long Range/Strategic Plan includes timelines, methods of assessment (including designation of completion from "undone" to "finished"), individuals responsible for execution and clear financial implications.
- 14.i. The school aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard.

Required Materials:

- A. Current Strategic Plan

Assessment of Standards

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

- SM1: Standard Met: evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.
- SM2: Standard Met: evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.
- SU1: Standard Unmet: evidences inadequate understanding, implementation and planning for remediation that may foreseeably compromise student experience.
- SU2: Standard Unmet: lacks understanding, implementation and planning for remediation, thereby compromising student experience.

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

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

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

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